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Noah felled the cedars for the ark

The BOOK of LEGENDS

TALES FROM THE TALMUD AND MIDRASH

BY

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"MISHNAH", "HOLIDAY TALES",
"THREE KINGS", ETC.

BIBLICAL PERIOD

PART I.

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NEW YORK

The Jordan Publishing Co., INC.

1929

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New York

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Printed in United States of America

PREFACE

The Talmud is generally spoken of as containing two divisions: Halakah (law), and Haggadah (legend). In addition to the vast collection of legendary material embodied in the Talmud, there exists a huge Midrashic literature which contains nothing but legend.

Haggadah, however, embraces more than mere *legend,* the appellation by which it is commonly known. *Legend* in this case is merely a convenient designation, to differentiate the Haggadic part of the Rabbinic literature from the Halakah, which deals chiefly with law and custom.

While it is true that the Halakic portion of the Talmud deals exclusively with legal decisions, the Haggadah contains more than mere legend. Poetry, philosophy, ethics, science, maxims, folk-lore, or any other subject that does not fall within the meaning of law or custom, is included in the term Haggadah.

The present work, "The Book of Legends," is an attempt to acquaint the reader with only one branch of the Haggadah, namely, that which deals with folk-lore, anecdotes, legends and fancies

woven about a hero or an historic event of importance.

These volumes are arranged historically, *i.e.*, in chronological order. And, as no hero and no historic event is entirely free from legendary ornamentation, it follows that "The Book of Legends" is really a history of the Jews in legends, covering the period from the creation of the world to Rabbah bar Nahmani (about 300 C. E.).

The legends of the sages, save some of the minor authorities, are not mere empty tales. They embody and teach morality, implicit faith in God, humility, brotherly love and justice. The sages, in their sense of justice, spared no one, not even the Almighty Himself, whenever in their opinion criticism was in place.

One of the greatest lyric poets, Heinrich Heine, in his poem "Jehudah ben Halevy," sings: "But the Haggadah I will call a garden most fantastic."

And, reading the wonderfully told tales and legends from the Talmud and the Midrashim, one indeed enters into a garden full of fancy where unfold lofty, poetic ideas which reflect the views and thoughts of the sages. The heroes, graced by legend, rise before us in their gigantic stature, towering above others in modesty, greatness, morality, and, above all, magnanimity and tolerance.

Upon a careful reading of the legends, one is

carried away upon the wings of fantasy into a celestial world, full of beauty, grace, poetry and love, purged of all that is earthly and gross.

A list of works from which the tales and legends were collected is given at the end of each volume.

H. E. G.

New York, December, 1928.

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THE BOOK OF LEGENDS

VOLUME I

CHAPTER I

THE CREATION OF THE WORLD

1. *God Consults the Torah*

NINE hundred and seventy-four generations before He created heaven and earth, God made the Torah. It was written in black fire on white fire. At the same time He created the throne of Divine Majesty and then He resolved to create Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, the Children of Israel, the Holy Temple, and the name of the Messiah.

When God was about to create this world, He spoke to the Torah and said: "In thy opinion would it be wise to create the earth?"

"O Lord God," answered the Torah, "a king must needs an army, courtiers and attendants to do his bidding. But, merciful God, man, who is destined to rule the earth, will be sinful and will disregard the laws Thou hast entrusted to me."

"Let not the sinfulness of man trouble thee," replied God. "Repentance was created by Me

long ago, and people who are sinful will be able to mend their ways and be forgiven by Me. Then I have created Paradise and Hell to serve as reward and punishment. Finally, the Messiah will bring salvation to the world by putting an end to sin."

2. *Justice and Mercy*

Having thus satisfied the Torah, God said to Justice: "Go and rule the earth which I am about to create."

God then created seven worlds, but they displeased Him and were destroyed. Justice was too severe a ruler, and the worlds created could not meet with God's approval.

He turned to Mercy. "Go thou, O Mercy," He said, "and together with Justice rule over the world I am about to create. Ruled by Justice alone, no world can exist."

God then created our world and ordained it to be ruled over by both Justice and Mercy.

Then God said to the works He had created: "This condition do I make with you: If the Israelites will accept the Torah from Me, ye shall remain in existence; should they refuse, ye shall return to chaos again."

3. *The First and Second Day*

The world was created in six days. On the first day God created the heavens and the earth, light and darkness, wind and water, day and night.

Seven heavens and seven earths were created. The first heaven serves as a cover to conceal the light in the nighttime. To the second heaven the planets are fastened. In the third heaven manna is made for the pious in the world to come. The fourth heaven contains the heavenly city of Jerusalem with the Temple in which the Archangel Michael ministers as high priest. The angels dwell in the fifth heaven, and in the sixth all trials and decrees for the earth and its inhabitants are ordained. The seventh heaven contains Right, Justice, Mercy, Peace, Blessing, storehouses of life, the departed souls of the pious, the souls of generations to be born, the dew with which God will revive the dead on the day of resurrection, and the throne of Divine Majesty surrounded by ministering angels.

In the beginning God created darkness to reign upon the earth, but on the first day of the creation, God wrapped Himself in a white mantle, the brightness of which lighted up the world from one end to the other. The light which was thus created at the very beginning, was not the same as the light later on shed by the sun. The first light was so brilliant that it enabled men to see the world at a glance from one end to the other. But when God saw the generations of the flood and of the division (Tower of Babel) and beheld their wickedness, He reserved this light for the pious in time to come.

In addition to our heavens and earth, God made one hundred and ninety-six thousand other worlds. It takes five hundred years to walk from the earth to the heaven and from one end of the heaven to the other and also from one heaven to the next. It takes the same length of time to walk from the east to the west, or from the south to the north.

On the second day God created the firmament, or the partition between the waters above and the waters below, as well as hell, fire, and the angels.

All the angels in heaven praise God, but they are not permitted to begin their songs of praise until the earthly beings have offered theirs. When the heavenly beings encircle the throne of Divine Majesty and desire to sing the praise of God, He silences them, saying: "Be still until I have heard the songs and praises of Israel." Then the divine herald, the angel Shamiel, flies to the windows of the lowest heaven to listen to the prayers that come from the synagogues. When these prayers are finished, he announces the end to the angels, and then they sing, "Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of Hosts."

4. *Unity, Pride*

Until the third day the entire earth was a plain covered with water. God then said to Rahab, the Angel of the Sea: "Open thy mouth and swallow all the water that covers the face of the earth."

But Rahab refused, saying: "Master of the universe, is it not enough that I keep my own waters?"

God punished the Angel for his disobedience with death. He then commanded that the water be gathered together in one place. When the earth heard this from the mouth of God, it immediately formed into hills and mountains, thus producing many valleys into which the water might descend. But the water, after having descended into the valleys, again overflowed its banks and boasted: "I am the mightiest of all the creatures that God has made. Let me flood the entire earth again, because here in the narrow valleys and lowly spots there is not sufficient room for me."

God, hearing these boastful words, rebuked the water and said: "Do not boast of thy strength, O water. Behold, I will order the sand to make a boundary for thee which thou shalt not be able to pass."

The water, beholding the grains of sand and seeing that they were very small and light, despised them and said: "What can these small, weak things do to me? The smallest of my waves will pass over them and scatter them all over the earth."

The biggest grain of sand saw that his smaller brothers were greatly frightened at the boastful words of the water. He called them together and said: "Fear not, my brothers; true, we are small, weak and powerless when each of us is for himself. Divided, we would fly into the endless abyss if the slightest wind blew upon us. Let us then

unite and live in peace one close to the other and never separate. United we shall become very powerful, and the boastful water, knowing our strength and power, will no longer despise us. Therefore let us unite and live forever in peace with one another."

The grains of sand hearkened to the wise words of their elder brother. They flew together from all the four corners of the earth, united and rested upon the shores of the seas in great heaps, thus forming an impassable barrier around the boastful ocean.

The water looked at the sand again, and, seeing how powerful it was, trembled and recoiled.

On the same day God also created all kinds of plants. First, He created the cedars of the Lebanon and other great trees. Because they were created first, these trees became very proud and shot up high in the air.

"I detest pride," said God, and He at once made iron, the material with which trees are cut down. The trees began to weep, but the iron said to them: "Weep not, you will yourselves provide the axe with a handle. Without your aid I shall not be able to do you any harm."

5. *Jealousy*

On the fourth day, God created the sun, the moon, and the stars. At first the light of the moon was equal to that of the sun. This fact greatly dis-

pleased the moon. She presented herself before God and said: "Master of All the Worlds, Thou hast created the sun and the moon, and Thou hast given to both the same amount of light. Anyone looking at them will not be able to distinguish one from the other. Is it not becoming that one of them should be greater than the other?"

"I have hearkened unto thy words," said God, "and know that thou wouldst have Me make thee greater than the sun. Therefore from this day on, thy light shall be reduced to one sixtieth of what it is now, and all living things shall know that the smaller light is the moon, and the greater light is the sun."

"Must I be punished so severely for having spoken a single word?" pleaded the moon.

"In the future world," said God, "I shall make thy light again equal to that of the sun."

The moon was not yet satisfied. "O Lord," she said, "and the light of the sun, how great will it be then?"

"What! Thou still plottest against the sun?" exclaimed God angrily. "In the world to come, his light shall be sevenfold the light he now sheds."

"The punishment meted out to me is greater than I can bear," wailed the moon before God.

"Therefore," replied God, "I shall set the stars in the firmament to accompany thee on thy journey at night."

Thus God set all the stars in the sky to accompany the moon.

The sun and the moon are unwilling to perform their daily duties and they approach God and say to Him: "Merciful God, relieve us from our duties, so that we may be spared the sight of sinning mankind." But God forces them to proceed with their appointed tasks. When they come forth from the presence of God, they are blinded by the most extraordinary light in the heavens, and they are unable to find their way. God, therefore, shoots off arrows, which, by their glittering light, guide the sun and the moon on their way.

6. *The Fifth and the Sixth Day*

On the fifth day God made the fishes of the sea out of fire and water, and He appointed the leviathan ruler over all the sea-animals.

On the same day the birds were created and the ziz was chosen to rule over them.

On the sixth day God made all kinds of animals, and behemot was set to rule over them. Among the wonderful creatures created by God, the "man of the mountain" is the most remarkable. His form is that of a human being, but he is fastened to the ground by means of an umbilical cord and if that cord snaps, he dies. He lives on whatever the earth produces round about him as far as his string permits him to go. No creature may ven-

ture to approach him, for he seizes and destroys whatever comes within his reach.

When first created, the cat and the mouse were friends, but once the mouse appeared before the Lord, and said: "The cat and I are partners, but now we have nothing to eat."

"Thou art plotting against thy companion that thou mayest destroy her," said God. "As a punishment, she shall destroy thee."

"O Lord of the world, wherein have I sinned?" asked the mouse.

"Thou didst fail to profit by the example of the moon, who lost a part of her light because she spoke ill of the sun," replied God. "Thy evil intentions against thy companion shall be punished in the same way. Instead of thee destroying her, she shall destroy thee."

"O Lord of the world, shall nothing of me be spared, and shall my whole kind be destroyed?" asked the mouse.

"I will take care that thy kind be spared," replied God.

Enraged by the punishment meted out to her the mouse bit the cat, and the cat in turn attacked the mouse and killed her. Since that time the mouse is so afraid of the cat that she never makes an attempt to defend herself against the cat's attack, but always remains in hiding.

The raven observed the graceful step of the

dove and tried to imitate her. He made every attempt to attain his end, but without success. He was ridiculed by all the animals for not being satisfied with the gait God had given him. He then decided to return to his natural gait, but was unable to do so because he had forgotten it. As a result he could walk neither his own way nor the dove's way properly, and his step became an awkward hop.

When the dog and the cat were created by God, they were friendly toward each other, but something happened later which made them enemies. The dog and the cat were partners, and they used to share with each other whatever they had. Once it happened that they were unable to find anything to eat for three days. Then the dog said to the cat: "Let us dissolve partnership, and you go into the house of Adam where you will surely find enough to eat; while I will seek my fortune elsewhere. Let us take an oath never to go to the same master."

The cat and the dog accordingly bound themselves by an oath and separated. Thereupon the cat took up her abode with Adam, where she found enough mice to satisfy her hunger. Adam treated her with kindness when he noticed that she was useful in driving away mice.

The dog, on the other hand, met with hard luck. The first night he came to the cave of the wolf

and he said: "Wolf, wolf, will you not let me stay in your house over night?"

"Yes," answered the wolf, "come right in."

At night the dog said to the wolf: "Host, I hear the sound of steps near our cave."

"Go out and drive the prowlers away," said the wolf.

The dog went out on his mission, and to his surprise he found a pack of wild animals which almost tore him to pieces.

Disappointed, the dog went to the house of the monkey, and he said: "Monkey, monkey, will you not let me stay in your house over night?"

"No," replied the monkey, "you can have no lodging with me."

He then went to the sheep which allowed him to stay over night. But in the middle of the night he heard footsteps again. He informed the sheep, which told him to drive the prowlers away. On going out, he found a pack of wolves, which had heard the barking of the dog and had learned the whereabouts of the sheep. They immediately entered the fold of the sheep and tore her to pieces. Thus did the dog unknowingly cause the death of his host.

Now the dog had lost his last friend, and night after night he wandered around looking for shelter, but he never succeeded in finding a home. At last he decided to go to the house of Adam, who

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allowed him to stay there. At night the dog caught the sound of steps of wild animals and he began to bark. Adam awoke and with his bow and arrow he drove the animals away.

"Stay with me all the time," said Adam to the dog when he saw how useful he was.

"No, that dog cannot stay with me in one house," shouted the cat; "for he broke his oath to me; he promised never to come to the same house."

"Calm yourself," said Adam to the cat; "he remains here at my invitation, and I have enough to take care of both of you."

"Nor will I touch any of your food," added the dog.

"I cannot live in one and the same house with a thief," argued the cat.

Seeing that no peace could be made with his old partner, the dog went to the house of Seth, where he was received kindly. From there the dog tried to make peace with the cat, but to no avail. Thenceforth the enmity between the dog and the cat grew very bitter and passed on from one generation to the other.

Chapter II

ADAM

1. *The Creation of Man*

ON the sixth day of the Creation, God made all kinds of animals. His work having been completed, God sat upon the Throne of Divine Majesty and myriads upon myriads of angels waited upon Him. Then God said to the angels: "Let us make a man in our form and image, and he shall rule over the works of My hand; all the beasts of the earth and all the fowl of the air shall dread him."

"O mighty God," pleaded Truth, "do not create man, because he will annoy me with lies and falsehoods."

"O merciful God, do create man," begged Mercy, "because he will be merciful to all Thy creatures."

Then came Peace, and weeping bitterly before God, said: "Wherefore, O God, shouldst Thou create man when he will prevent all the creatures of the world from living in peace?"

"O Lord, may my words find grace with Thee," pleaded Justice. "Do create man for he will love

me, he will have pity upon the poor and needy and help them in their distress."

God heard all these pleas and He cast Truth down from heaven to earth.

"O Lord, why hast Thou done this to Truth?" cried the angels. "Is not Truth Thine own seal?"

"Man will love the Truth with all his heart and soul," said God. "Truth will then return to Me."

God then said to the angel Gabriel: "Go fetch Me dust from the four corners of the earth and I will create man out of it."

Gabriel went forth to do as God had commanded him, but the earth drove him away and refused to let him gather some dust.

"Why, O Earth, dost thou not hearken to the voice of the Lord, thy Creator?" asked Gabriel.

"I am destined to become a curse, and be cursed through man, and if God Himself does not take the dust from me, no one else shall ever do it."

When God heard this, He stretched out His hand, took dust from the four corners of the earth, and created the first man out of it. He then blew into his nostrils the breath of life but the man lay still.

While the first man thus lay still, God revealed the whole future history of mankind to him. He showed him each generation with its leaders and its prophets. And when God showed him the great soul of David, the first man asked: "How long is this soul destined to live?"

"But one minute of life is apportioned to this great soul," answered God.

"And how long am I destined to live?" the first man inquired.

"One thousand years," replied God.

"Reduce then my own years to nine hundred and thirty. I will make a gift of seventy years to this soul."

When the generation of the martyr Rabbi Akiba was shown to him, he rejoiced at the sage's great learning, but he was grieved at his horrible death.

One hour passed, and when God was about to put a soul into Adam's body, He said: "I will not breathe the soul into the mouth, for he will use it to speak ill of his fellow-man; I will not breathe it into his eyes, for he will wink lustfully with them; I will not breathe it into his ears, for he will hearken to slander; I will breathe it into his nostrils; as they are able to detect the unclean and reject it and take in the fragrant, so will the pious shun sin and heed the words of the Torah."

Then the first man opened his eyes, and when he saw heaven and earth and all their hosts, he broke forth into praise of God, exclaiming: "How great are Thy works, O Lord."

Thereupon the angels approached God and said: "Why hast Thou created man when all his days shall pass in sorrow and distress?"

"Had I not intended to create man," God said, "I would not have created the cattle of the earth,

the fowl of the air, and the fishes of the sea. Know ye, also, that I have bestowed My spirit upon him and he shall rule over the works of My hand."

"What is man that Thou regardest him so, and what is his nature?" they asked.

"His knowledge excels yours," answered God.

God then ordered all the cattle, animals, and fowl to pass in front of the angels, and He inquired of them: "Can ye tell Me the names of all these creatures?"

"O God, we do not know the names of all these creatures," answered the angels.

Then God called Adam and said: "Tell Me the names of all these creatures?"

Adam answered and said: "The name of this creature is cow. The names of these creatures are donkey, horse, camel," and thus Adam gave names to all creatures.

Then God said: "What is thy name?"

"My name," said the man, "is Adam, because I was fashioned out of the earth (Adamah)."

"And what is My name?" asked God.

"Thy name is Lord," answered Adam, "because Thou art the Lord of all creatures."

And the angels came down from heaven and bowed to Adam. Only Satan refused to do homage to Adam as he had been bidden. Then said Michael, the Angel, to Satan: "Do homage to the image of God. If thou dost not do it, the wrath of the Lord God will be kindled against thee."

"If He waxes angry at me," replied Satan, "I will exalt my throne above the stars of God, and I will be like the Most High."

At once God flung Satan and his host out of heaven, down to the earth, and from that moment dates the enmity between Satan and man.

God then led Adam through the Garden of Eden, and said to him: "See how beautiful are the works of My hands! Whatever I have created was made for thy sake. Take care lest thou spoil or destroy My world, for if thou wilt spoil it, there will be none to set it aright again."

2. *Eve*

"It is not good for the man to be alone," said God. "I will make for him a mate."

When the earth heard what God had resolved to do, she began to tremble and quake. "I have not the strength," she complained, "to provide food for all of Adam's descendants."

But God pacified her with the words: "I and thou together will provide food for them."

Accordingly, time was divided between God and the earth; God took the night, and the earth took the day. Refreshing sleep nourishes and strengthens man, and affords him life and rest, while the earth brings forth crops with the help of God, who waters it.

God then caused a deep sleep to come over Adam, and when He was about to make Eve, He

said: "I will not make her from the head of man, lest she carry her head in arrogant pride; nor from the eye lest she be wanton-eyed; nor from the ear, lest she be an eavesdropper; nor from the neck, lest she be insolent; nor from the mouth, lest she be a tattler; nor from the heart, lest she be inclined to envy; nor from the hand, lest she be a meddler; nor from the foot, lest she be a gadabout." God then took the rib from Adam's side, and as He formed it into the shape of a woman, He said to every limb and organ: "Be pure, be pure."

The wedding of the first couple was celebrated in wonderful fashion. God Himself, before presenting Eve to Adam, adorned her as a bride. Then He said to the angels: "Come, let us perform friendly services for Adam and his helpmate, for friendliness is more pleasing to me than sacrifices offered upon the altar."

The angels accordingly assembled around the marriage canopy, and God pronounced the blessings upon the bridal couple. The angels then danced and played musical instruments before Adam and Eve in the ten bridal chambers of gold, pearls, and precious stones, which God had prepared for them.

Chapter III

THE FALL OF MAN

1. *The First Commandment*

INTO the Garden of Eden, which God had planted, Adam and Eve were sent to live. Out of the ground God caused to grow all kinds of beautiful trees which bore fruits delicious to the taste. In the center of the garden stood the tree of life and the tree of knowledge.

"The fruit of every tree in the garden thou mayest eat," God commanded Adam, "but the fruit of the tree of knowledge thou shalt not eat; for on the day thou eatest of it thou shalt surely die."

Adam and Eve lived happily in this Paradise, and did not have to till the soil nor do work of any sort. Angels brought them meat and wine, serving them like attendants. The animals likewise ministered to their wants. They understood the language of man, and feared the first human couple, for they respected the image of God.

2. *The Crime*

The serpent was the most notable among the animals. Like a man, he stood upright upon two feet,

and in height he was equal to a camel. God created the serpent to serve man and to bring him silver, gold, gems and pearls from the ends of the earth.

When the serpent saw Adam and Eve living in luxury in the Garden of Eden, he grew very jealous of them and one day he approached the woman, and said to her enticingly: "Eve, why do you not eat of the fruit of the tree which is in the midst of the Garden?"

"God has commanded us not to eat the fruit of this tree and not to touch it, lest we die," replied Eve.

The serpent touched the tree, and the tree exclaimed: "Wicked one, do not touch me." The serpent then turned to the woman, and said: "Behold, I have touched the tree and am still alive, neither shall you die when you touch it."

But Eve would not touch the tree. The serpent then pushed her against it, and when she touched its trunk, the serpent said: "See, Eve, you have touched the tree yet you are still alive. Know therefore, that even if you should eat of its fruit, you would not die."

When the serpent saw that Eve did not heed his words, he again spoke to her: "Know you not, Eve," he said, "that God Himself has eaten of the fruit of this tree? That was the reason He grew wise, great and powerful, and was able to create the world, and whatever is upon it. It is because

of fear that He commanded you and your husband not to eat of this wonderful tree. He feared lest if you ate of its fruit, you become as wise as He and be able to create other worlds."

But Eve would not be persuaded and the serpent became more insistent: "Behold you and your husband were created last of all the creatures and therefore you are wise and rule over all the creatures that were created before you," he continued. "If you will not eat of the fruit of this tree, God will create some new creatures after you, and they will be stronger and wiser than you. They will rule over you and you will perish from the earth."

The serpent then shook the tree violently, and brought down its fruit. He ate some of it and said: "As I do not die from eating the fruit, neither will you."

When Eve heard this, she took some of the fruit of the tree and ate it. She immediately noticed the Angel of Death coming to meet her and exclaimed: "Now I shall die and God will create another woman and give her to Adam as his wife." She thereupon made her husband eat it, and she forced the fruit upon the animals and birds that they might fall under the same condemnation, and be subject to death. Then she approached the Phoenix and said to him: "Here is some of the fruit of the tree which is in the midst of the Garden of Eden; eat thereof even as all the other birds of the garden have done."

"God forbid," said the Phoenix, "that I should disobey His command."

Eve then tried to persuade him, but he did not listen to her. God thereupon said: "Because the Phoenix refused to obey Eve, he shall live forever."

And so it does.

At the end of one thousand years his body shrivels up to the size of an egg. From this egg a little bird emerges which continues to grow bigger and stronger until it attains its full size and strength. Then it lives for another thousand years.

Adam then heard the angels announce: "God is betaking Himself unto those that dwell in the Paradise." He heard more, too. "What! He still moves about in Paradise?" exclaimed the angels in astonishment before God. "He is not yet dead?"

"I said to him," answered God, "'On the day thou eatest thereof, thou shalt die.' Now ye know not what manner of day I meant, one of My days, a day of a thousand years, or one of yours. I will give him one of My days. He shall have nine hundred and thirty years to live, and seventy more to leave to his descendant David."

The eyes of Adam and Eve were opened because they ate of the tree of knowledge, and they knew that they were naked. When they became aware of their nakedness, they wept bitterly. With them wept the clouds, the sun, the stars, and all created

things. The very angels in heaven grieved over the fall of man. The moon alone laughed.

Adam and Eve tried to gather leaves from the trees to cover part of their bodies. But when they approached the trees, each one exclaimed: "Here are the thieves who have deceived God, their Creator. Nay, the foot of pride shall not come against me, nor the hands of the wicked touch me." Only the fig tree let them take of its leaves.

3. *The Punishment*

When Adam and Eve heard God approach, they hid among the trees. Standing at the gate of Paradise, God asked: "Where art thou, Adam?"

"I heard Thy voice in the garden, and I was ashamed because I was naked," answered Adam.

"Who told thee that thou wert naked?" asked God. "Hast thou eaten of the tree whereof I commanded thee not to eat?"

"O Lord of the World," said Adam, "as long as I was alone, I did not fall into sin, but as soon as this woman came to me, she tempted me. She gave me of the tree and I did eat it."

"I gave thee this woman as a mate," replied God, "and thou art ungrateful when thou accusest her, saying: 'She gave me of the tree.' Thou shouldst not have hearkened unto her."

"What hast thou done?" asked God of Eve.

"The serpent persuaded me, and I did it," answered the woman.

"I created thee to be king over all the animals, cattle and beasts of the field," said God to the serpent, "but thou wast not satisfied. Therefore shalt thou be cursed from among all the cattle and from among all beasts of the field. I created thee to possess the power of speech, but thou wast not satisfied. Therefore shalt thy mouth be closed and the power of speech taken away from thee. I created thee to eat the same food as man, but thou wast not satisfied. Therefore shalt thou eat dust all the days of thy life. I created thee to walk upright, but thou wast not satisfied. Therefore shalt thou go upon thy belly."

At that very moment angels descended from heaven, and cut off the serpent's hands and feet. He uttered a piercing cry which was heard from one end of the earth to the other.

To the woman God said: "Because thou hast done this evil thing, thy suffering shall be very great. In great pain shalt thou bring forth children, and thy husband shall rule over thee."

And unto Adam He said: "Because thou hast hearkened unto thy wife and sinned, the earth shall no more bring forth for thee fruit trees like those in the Garden of Eden but thistles and thorns, and thou shalt eat the grass of the fields. Thy days shall be few, and full of trouble and grief. In death thy body shall be the prey of worms. Animals shall no longer fear and respect thee, and may even devour thee."

When Adam heard these words, he trembled, and big drops of perspiration covered his face. "O merciful God," he exclaimed, "shall I be likened to cattle and eat grass with cows from the same manger?"

The Lord had mercy upon him and said: "Because thou art sorry in thy heart and criest out unto Me, by the sweat of thy brow thou shalt eat bread."

To the moon God said: "Because thou alone didst laugh at the fall of man, while all other creatures had pity on him, thy light shall be obscured. Instead of shining steadily like the sun, thou shalt grow old quickly, and thou shalt be born and die every month."

God was full of pity for Adam and his wife. He made garments for them out of the skin stripped from the serpent, and He clothed them. These garments possessed wonderful qualities. He who wore them became very powerful. Even the beasts and the birds of the woods feared the one who was arrayed in them. As soon as they caught sight of him, they would fall upon the ground in awe.

In the twilight of the Sabbath eve, God commanded the angels to turn Adam and Eve out of the Garden of Eden, lest they eat of the tree of life and live forever. God also ordained that the heavenly light, by which Adam could survey the world from end to end, should disappear.

When the order was thus given by God, Adam heard the angels call after him: "Adam will not abide in his glory over night!"

Then Sabbath came, presented itself before God, and pleaded: "Lord God of heaven and earth! Thou hast created the world in six days, and during these working days, Thou didst not punish any creature. Now, when the seventh day has come, which was blessed and sanctified by Thee above all other days, Thou dost intend to punish Adam. O Lord, have mercy upon the man and permit him to remain here this Sabbath day."

God hearkened to the plea of the Sabbath, and He permitted Adam and Eve to remain in the garden on this holy day. When the end of the holy day was drawing nigh, and the sun was about to set, God expelled Adam and Eve from the Garden of Eden. Before leaving the Garden of Eden, Adam took with him the vines.

That Adam and Eve might not come back into the garden, God placed an angel with a revolving sword of fire to guard the gate. Outside the garden Adam and his wife for the first time saw the sun set and darkness come upon the earth. They were terrified, for they knew not what darkness meant, because in the Garden of Eden there had been no darkness; for there the original light shone which God had first created upon the earth and by means of which one could see from one end of the

Before leaving the Garden of Eden, Adam took with him the vines

earth to the other. In his great terror, Adam exclaimed: "Alas, now when I am covered with darkness, the serpent will come and have his revenge on me." Then God gave him two hard stones. Adam took the stones, struck them one against the other, and a fire came out. Upon seeing this fire, Adam and Eve were overjoyed, and exclaimed: "Blessed be the Lord who created the light of the fire."

When God saw that Adam and Eve repented of their evil, He said to them: "Behold, I give you something which no other living creature possesses; I give you tears. If ye will shed tears in time of trouble, ye will find some consolation in them."

4. *The Cunning of the Fox*

God thereupon said to the Angel of Death: "Behold, into thy power do I deliver all living things. Cast thou one pair of each kind into the water, and thou and leviathan shall have dominion over everything that possesses life."

The Angel of Death accordingly cast one pair of each kind into the ocean, and when he was about to cast the fox into the water the latter began to wail bitterly.

"What is the cause of thy wailing?" asked the Angel of Death.

"I am simply mourning the sad fate of my

friend who was cast into the water," replied the fox, and he pointed to the figure of a fox in the sea, which in reality was but his own reflection.

The Angel of Death, believing that a representative of the fox family had already been cast into the sea, let the fox go free. The fox disclosed his trick to the cat, and she too played it on the Angel of Death.

Leviathan passed all the animals in review and noticed the absence of the fox and the cat.

"How comes it that the fox and the cat families are not represented in my domain?" questioned leviathan.

"The sly fox played a trick on the Angel of Death and escaped," answered the animals. "Then he disclosed his trick to the cat, and she too escaped in the same fashion."

Leviathan called some of the biggest and most powerful fish, and said to them: "Go forth and entice the truant fox into the water."

A large number of fish swam near the shore where the fox was walking along, and when he noticed them he exclaimed: "How happy is he who is able to satisfy his hunger with the flesh of such creatures!"

"If you would but follow us," said the fish, "your appetite could easily be satisfied in such manner. A very great honor is awaiting you. Leviathan is on the point of death, and he commanded us to crown you as his successor. Now you need

not fear the water for we are ready to carry you on our backs and bring you to the throne which stands upon a very big rock."

The fox allowed himself to be persuaded and descended into the water. But soon he began to feel uneasy, and he urged the fish to tell him the truth.

"Leviathan," said they, "had sent us out to bring you before him, for he desires to eat your heart so that he may become as sly as you are."

"The foxes never carry around their hearts with them," said the fox reproachfully, "but they keep them in a safe place, and whenever they have need of them they take them from there. Why did you not tell me the truth at the very beginning? Then I would have taken my heart along with me, and King Leviathan would have showered honors upon me as well as upon you. If you bring me to him without my heart, then he will surely punish you."

The fishes quickly swam to shore, and landing the fox said to him: "Make haste and fetch your heart, for King Leviathan is awaiting us impatiently."

When the fox felt dry land under his feet, he began to dance and to shout for joy, and the fishes urged him: "Go in search of your heart and lose no time, for King Leviathan is waiting for us."

"You fools," said the fox. "Would it have been possible for me to follow you into the water, if I had not had my heart with me? Is there any

creature in existence that can walk about without his heart?"

"Come, come, you are fooling us," said the fishes suspiciously. "Make haste, fetch your heart and follow us."

"O you fools," said the fox sneeringly. "If I could play a trick on the Angel of Death, how much easier was it to play a trick on you."

Chapter IV

FROM ADAM TO NOAH

1. *Cain and Abel*

EVE bore a son whom she named Cain. Later on Eve bore a second son and this one she named Abel. When the boys grew up, Cain became a tiller of the ground, and Abel became a shepherd.

One day Abel selected the best sheep of his flocks, and brought it as an offering to God. Cain likewise thought of bringing an offering to God. But first he ate his meal, and after he had satisfied his hunger, he offered to God what was left over, a few grains of flax seed.

God accepted favorably the offering of Abel, and sent a heavenly fire down to consume it, while the offering of Cain was rejected. Cain therefore grew angry at his brother and looked for an opportunity to kill him.

Once, when they were alone in the field, Cain said to his brother: "Come, let us divide the world between the two of us."

"I am willing to divide the world between the two of us, as you desire," said Abel.

Then Cain took for himself the ground to till, and to Abel he gave the flocks. Cain said to his brother: "Lo, I have taken my portion and you have taken your portion, and now beware you do not enter into my domain."

The envy which lay in the heart of Cain gave him no rest. One day he said to his brother: "Remove your foot, you stand on my property; the plain is mine." Then Abel ran upon the hills, but Cain cried: "Away, the hills are mine." Then he climbed the mountains, but still Cain followed him, calling: "Away! The stony mountains are mine, too."

Once it happened that the flock of Abel ran over the ground Cain had been plowing. Cain, upon seeing this, grew very angry and said: "Have I not told you to keep away from my portion?"

"Not until you have paid me for the skins of my sheep and the wool of their fleece used for your clothing," replied Abel. Cain became angry and pursued Abel from hill to dale and from dale to hill until he overtook him. In the struggle that followed both brothers wrestled for a long time, and at last Abel knocked his brother down to the ground, and was above him. Cain pleaded with his brother and said: "Pray, brother, do not harm me. Are we not sons of one father? Why will you kill me? And besides, only the two of us are found in this world; what excuse then will you be able to offer to our father and mother?" Abel

in his kindness listened to the words of his brother and let him free.

But when Abel had turned his back and was about to depart, Cain suddenly fell upon him and began pounding his body with stones. Cain first bruised Abel's hands, then his feet, then other parts of his body, for he knew not how to cause death. At last he struck Abel on the neck, and with this blow caused him to die.

2. *The Punishment*

"Now I must flee from my father and my mother," cried Cain, "lest they say that I have killed my brother Abel, and punish me."

Suddenly he heard a powerful voice calling unto him: "Thou canst flee from the presence of thy father and mother, but thou canst not flee from My presence, for even shouldst thou hide thyself in the most secret place, still will I be able to see thee. Where is thy brother Abel?"

"I do not know where he is," replied Cain; "why seek him at my hands? I will rather demand him from Thee, for Thou art the keeper of all creatures."

"What hast thou done?" said God, for it was He. "Thy brother's blood is crying unto Me from the ground."

Cain was surprised and said: "I have never heard of a slain person, nor have I ever seen one; how was I to know that he would die when I

struck him with a stone? And how dost Thou know what I have done? Dost Thou have informers who slander men before Thee? Lo, my father and mother who live with me on the same earth do not know what I have done, and Thou, O Lord, art in heaven, and still knowest my crime. Pray forgive Thy servant's sin, for I regret what I have done."

God said: "Because thou regrettest the evil thou hast done, I shall make thy punishment more lenient: thou shalt be a wanderer all thy life."

"If I am to wander all my life," pleaded Cain, "then whoever finds me will kill me."

God then put a sign of pardon on Cain: a horn which grew out of the middle of his forehead, and which warned those who found him to do him no harm.

After Abel was slain, the dog which had kept his sheep guarded his body. Adam and Eve sat beside the corpse and wept, and knew not what to do. Then said a raven, whose companion had died: "I will show Adam what to do." He dug a hole in the soil, laid his friend there, and covered him up with earth.

Adam seeing this, said to Eve: "Now, we will do the same with Abel." They dug a grave and there buried their dead son.

"I shall reward thee for this kind act," said God to the raven. "None shall ever injure thy young

ones, and thy prayer for rain shall always be answered at once."

When Cain went out from the presence of God, and wandered aimlessly, all animals and beasts roared at him. They set their teeth against him and said: "Here is the man who murdered his brother. Come, let us gather together and tear him to pieces." Cain trembled greatly at their words, but all animals on approaching him saw the mark that God had placed upon Cain, and dared not injure him.

One day Adam met Cain, and looked with wonder at the token of pardon, and asked:

"How hast thou turned away the wrath of the Almighty?"

"By confession and repentance," said Cain.

"Woe is me!" cried Adam, smiting his brow. "Is the virtue of repentance so great, and I knew it not? To think that by repentance I might have altered my lot!"

3. *Cain's End*

Lamech, the great grandson of Cain, grew very old and his eyesight failed him. He called Tubalcain, his son, and said: "Take me to the forest that I may hunt some animals there." Tubalcain led his father by the arm, and both went to the forest.

Arriving there, the father said to the son:

"Look around you everywhere and when you see an animal, tell me and I will shoot at it with my bow and arrow."

Cain, the wanderer, happened to pass through the forest at the time, and Tubalcain, seeing something horned from a distance, took it to be some beast. "Let your arrow fly eastward," shouted Tubalcain to this father, "for I see an animal there." Lamech shot in that direction; the aim was good, and the seeming beast fell to the ground. Hastily both ran to the place where the victim lay dead. On approaching it, Tubalcain exclaimed: "O father, you have killed something that resembles a human being in all respects, except that it has a horn on its forehead." Lamech knew at once what had happened—he had killed his ancestor Cain. Then he uttered a great and bitter cry. "Alas," he mourned, "I have slain my great grandfather Cain!" In despair and grief he smote his hands together so forcibly that his son Tubalcain, who stood in front of him, was crushed between them and died instantly.

Being blind, Lamech was not able to return home, and remained seated for a long time by the bodies of Cain and Tubalcain. Toward evening, the two wives of Lamech, seeing that he had not returned home, went out to seek him and found him in the forest. When they saw the corpses and learned what had happened, they became very angry at Lamech, and refused to take him home.

But Lamech pleaded with them and said that he had killed the two men without intention or knowledge, because he was blind and could not see.

The three of them went to Adam, who acted as judge and listened to their complaints. He decided the case in favor of Lamech and made peace between him and his wives.

4. *Enosh*

Eve, the wife of Adam, bore him a third son, whom she named Seth. Seth grew up to be a good man. To Seth was born a son whose name was Enosh. This Enosh knew how to draw pictures of all animals and birds, and of all things that are in heaven above and on the earth below. Enosh stopped serving the true God in heaven, and persuaded all the people of his generation to worship the pictures he had made and to bow to them. Many people obeyed him. They forsook the Lord God and bowed to pieces of wood and stone instead.

Thereupon the anger of God was kindled against them and he caused the water of the sea to overflow, and many people were destroyed. Yet the people continued to sin against God, and the Lord therefore rendered the mountains upon which they sowed, as hard as copper, and the earth produced nothing but thorns. There was a famine in the land and the people suffered greatly. Neverthe-

less, the people did not improve, but went on sinning against God.

Then God removed from them the appearance of His image, and they resembled the apes and monkeys. When the beasts of the forest saw them, they feared them no longer and destroyed a great number of them. And when the people still refused to serve God, God said: "I will destroy all the people that I have created."

5. *Enoch*

To Enosh was born a son whose name was Kenan; to Kenan was born Mahalalel; to Mahalalel was born Jared; to Jared was born Enoch, and he, seeing the evil ways of men, despised them so greatly that he did not care to live among them. He therefore built for himself a hiding-place and hid there for many days. In that secret house he continually prayed to God, imploring Him to give unto man a pure heart that would love good and hate evil.

One day, while Enoch was thus standing and praying to the Lord, an angel of God appeared to him and exclaimed: "Enoch! Enoch!"

"Here I am," answered Enoch.

The angel continued: "Thus said God: 'Arise, get thee out of the place where thou hast hidden thyself. Go to thy fellowmen and teach them the right path to walk in and the acts they should do.' "

Thereupon Enoch left his hiding-place, went to

the people and taught them to be merciful, just and righteous. From all over the world they came to learn his wisdom and even kings and princes were among those who came to be his disciples.

One day all the kings of the world, who numbered one hundred and thirty in all, came to Enoch, and, bowing to him, said: "We desire you to reign over us, since you are so wise and good."

Enoch then reigned over the people for two hundred and forty-three years, and during his reign there was peace and plenty. Then Enoch said to himself: "The people of the world are now just and pious and I have no longer aught to do among them." He decided to retire to his secret place. But he withdrew from the world gradually. First he would spend three days in his secluded place, praying and praising God, and on the fourth day he would reappear among the people and teach them. Thus he continued to appear every fourth day for many years. Then for a number of years he appeared among them only once in seven days; then only once a month, and finally once a year. The more he kept away from the people, the more holy he was considered by them. His face sent forth beams resembling those of the sun, so that the people feared to approach him.

One day, all the kings, princes, judges and officers assembled at the place where Enoch was wont to appear. When they saw him approaching, they

all shouted with great joy: "May King Enoch live forever!" Enoch blessed them and began to instruct them in the ways of God, in his usual manner. While he was thus speaking, an angel of God called to him from heaven, saying: "Hear, O Enoch, God has commanded thee to ascend to heaven."

Enoch then called together all the inhabitants of the earth, and said to them: "I have been commanded to ascend to heaven. Now, listen to my last words before I am taken away. If you will live in peace and be kind to one another, and serve the Lord your God and love Him, He will bless you, and you will be as numerous as the stars in heaven."

A few more days Enoch spent among men teaching them wisdom and the knowledge of God. Then those that gathered near him saw a fiery horse come down from the skies, and they told Enoch about it. He said: "The steed is for me, for the time has come when I must leave you and go up to heaven."

The horse descended to the earth and stood before Enoch. Enoch mounted it and all the people, numbering eight hundred thousand in all, followed him. On the second day, Enoch urged the people to turn back: "Go you home, lest death overtake you if you follow me farther." Many of them went back, but a number remained with him for five more days. On the sixth day of the

journey, he said to those who still followed him: "Go you home, for to-morrow I shall ascend to heaven, and whoever will then be near me will die." But some of his followers refused to go back.

On the seventh day, Enoch was carried to heaven in a fiery chariot drawn by fiery horses. Snow and hailstones came down from the skies on the spot from which Enoch had risen and killed all the men who had refused to leave him.

The angels in heaven, upon scenting the odor of dust from the earth, said to God: "Lord of all the worlds! How comes a mortal, born of a woman, into the heaven to serve Thee?"

God replied: "Enoch is My faithful servant who served Me when all the people abandoned Me and worshipped idols."

God thereupon gave Enoch everlasting life, blessed him with many blessings, and said: "Behold, I have made thee holy, and from now on thou shalt be considered an angel of the Lord of Hosts."

After Enoch had been taken up to heaven, his son, Methuselah, was proclaimed ruler of the earth by all the kings. He walked in the footsteps of his father, teaching the truth, the knowledge and fear of God to his fellowmen.

Chapter V

NOAH

1. *The Strange Baby*

TO Methuselah a son was born who was named Lamech.

Methuselah took a wife for his son Lamech, and she bore Lamech a baby boy. When the babe opened his eyes, he lighted up the whole house, like the sun. He opened his mouth and praised the God of righteousness. His father, Lamech, was afraid of him and fled to Methuselah.

"I have begotten a strange son," said Lamech to his father. "He is not like a human being, for his eyes are like the rays of the sun."

When Methuselah heard this, he went to the end of the earth to see his father Enoch and to learn from him the truth about the newly born babe. Methuselah cried aloud, and Enoch heard his son's voice and appearing before him asked him for the reason of his coming. Methuselah told him the cause of his anxiety, and requested him to make the truth known to him. Then Enoch said: "The Lord will cause a flood upon the earth and destroy all living things. Only this newly

born son will be left, and with him his three sons will be saved. Now, make this known to thy son Lamech, and call the child Noah."

There was another token that the child born to Lamech was appointed for an extraordinary destiny. The fingers of his hands were not attached together like those of all the people in those days.

When Noah had grown to manhood, he looked at his separated fingers and said to himself: "Surely, not in vain has God created these hands different from all other hands. He gave me these special hands because He desires me to do with them work which could not have been done otherwise."

He at once began making instruments with which to plow the ground, and to reap its harvest. He thus became the inventor of the plow, the scythe, the hoe, and all other agricultural implements. Before him men had tilled the ground with their bare hands.

2. *The Wicked Generation*

The people of the generation of the flood became corrupt because they were very prosperous and did not have to till the soil. They were of extraordinary stature and strength, the like of which never will be. They were as swift as eagles, and they were able to uproot the lofty cedars of the Lebanan with the ease with which one is able to pluck the

grass in the field. The bite of lions, tigers, and bears had no more effect upon them than the bite of mere vermin. Immediately after birth, children were able to walk and talk, and they even aided their mothers in severing the navel string. If born in the night, the new-born babies would light the candles for their mothers.

Once it happened that a mother said to a new-born babe: "Go and fetch a light so that I can see how to cut the navel string." On his way, the child was met by the chief of the demons, who desired to kill the baby. There was a fight between the two, when suddenly the crowing of a cock was heard. The demon stopped fighting and said to the baby: "Go and tell thy mother that if it had not been for the crowing of the cock, I would have killed thee."

"Go and tell thy mother," said the baby "that if it had not been for my uncut navel string, I would have killed thee."

The people in those days continued to do evil in the eyes of the Lord. The whole world was full of sin and people did not live at peace with one another. God said to Noah: "Thou art the only righteous man in this generation."

The angels, upon hearing these words from God, approached Him and said: "Wherein does the righteousness of Noah consist that he should find grace in Thine eyes, O Lord?" The Almighty

answered: "When Enosh was requested to support his aged father, he said: 'I am ready to support my father.' When he was requested to support his grandfather, Enosh said: 'What have I to do with him? Is it not enough that I support my father, but I must also care for my grandfather?' All the generations that followed Enosh have likewise refused to take care of their grandfathers. But when Noah was asked to support his grandfather, he replied thus: 'I am willing not only to support my grandfather, but all my relatives and kinsmen who are in need.' "

When the angels heard the words of God, they said: "Truly there is no one as righteous as Noah. Let us therefore save him from death."

God said to Noah: "Go and proclaim thus to all sinners: 'Return ye from your evil ways, O men, and do not anger the Lord, lest He bring a flood upon you and destroy you quickly from the face of the earth.' "

Noah went to his grandfather, Methuselah the Righteous, and told him the words of God. The two pious men went together and proclaimed to the sinners thus: "Return ye from your evil ways, lest ye die." The sinners refused to listen to the words of Noah and Methuselah, and God said to Noah: "Make for thyself an ark and build it in a public place where everybody can see it, because after the expiration of one hundred and twenty

years, I will bring on a flood to destroy all living beings from the face of the earth."

Noah planted cedars, felled them when they were grown, and cut them into boards. When the wicked people saw Noah's doings, they said to him: "You mad old man, wherefore all this work? Wherefore all this precaution?" Noah answered: "Cease doing evil, O you men. Abandon your wicked ways, and return unto the Lord with all your heart, lest He may bring a flood upon you, and destroy you from the face of the earth." But they laughed at him and said: "God will bring a flood not upon us, but upon you and your own family."

When the building of the ark was in progress, the wicked people, who were giants in stature and strength, came to Noah, inquiring of him in order to mock him: "Wherefore this ark?"

"God will bring a flood upon you," replied Noah.

"What can God do to us?" asked the sinners. "What sort of flood can He bring? If He sends a flood of fire upon us, we know how to protect ourselves. If it is a flood of water, if it comes from above, it will never reach our necks; and if it wells up from below, the soles of our feet are large enough to stem the flow."

Noah was greatly grieved at their words of mockery, and begged them again to return from their evil ways. "The water will ooze forth from

under your feet," said Noah, "and you will not be able to stem it."

But it was all in vain.

Then God said to Noah: "I shall wipe out all flesh which I have created from upon the earth, man, cattle, beast, and fowl, because they all have become corrupt."

3. *The Fallen Angels*

When the generation of the flood turned towards evil, and practiced idolatry, two angels, Azael and Shemhazai, presented themselves before God and said: "Almighty Lord of heaven and earth, we begged of Thee at the creation of the world not to create man; now he is doing evil in Thine eyes."

Then God answered:

"What would have become of this earth and its hosts if no man had been created upon it?"

"If Thou wouldst make us dwell upon the earth," replied the angels, "Thou wouldst see how righteous and good we should be and evil inclination would never overpower us!"

But God hesitated. "I know," He made answer, "that when ye go down to the earth, ye will be more sinful and do more evil than man."

But the angels pleaded: "Grant us permission to go down to the earth and dwell among men, and there we will be as righteous as we are in heaven." Then God said to the angels: "Go down and dwell among men."

When the angels came down upon the earth, they forgot that they were angels and began to sin. One of the angels, Shemhazai, saw a very beautiful girl, whose name was Istehar, and he said to her: "You know that I am an angel of God, and I can do whatever you will desire. Will you consent to be my wife?"

The girl replied: "If you will disclose to me the secret by means of which you are able to raise yourself to heaven, I will consent to become your wife."

"When I wish to fly," the angel answered, "I have only to pronounce the Name of the Almighty, which is not known to any human being."

"Would you teach me this Holy Name?" Istehar asked.

The angel consented and taught her the Holy Name of God.

When Istehar learned this wonderful word, she pronounced it, and at once arose from the earth and ascended to heaven, where God spoke to her: "Because thou hast refused to become the wife of an angel, and cared not to remain on the earth upon which thou dwellest, but preferred to come to heaven and keep aloof from sin, I shall deal kindly with thee." God placed Istehar among the seven bright stars, that men may never forget her.

The two angels took for themselves wives and lived happily upon the earth, and to Shemhazai two sons were born. Then God sent the angel

Metatron, who was known as Enoch, to tell Shemhazai that He would bring on a flood and destroy the world. The fallen angel wept and grieved over the fate of the world, and the fate of his two sons. "My two sons," he cried, "need for their daily meals a thousand camels, a thousand horses and a thousand steers. If the world came to an end, what would they have to eat?"

To the two sons there came strange dreams. One saw in his dream a great stone which had the shape of a table, and on it was engraved the earth and everything on it, the ocean, fields, cattle, fowl, and so forth. An angel of God came down from heaven, and with a sharp knife which he had in his hand erased the figures which were engraved on the stone, leaving only four words. On the same night the other son saw in his dream a beautiful orchard, planted with all sorts of beautiful fruit trees, the like of which he had never seen before. While he was thus enjoying the sight of the orchard, many angels came down from heaven with axes in their hands, and they cut down the trees, only one tree with three of its branches being spared.

When they awoke, they ran to their parents and related their dreams. Their father told them that God would bring a flood upon the earth and destroy all living beings, and that only Noah and his three sons would be left. When they heard this, the two sons began to cry, but their father

consoled them. Then Shemhazai repented the evil he had done and he suspended himself between heaven and earth. God did not forget his sins, and left him hanging in mid-air, with his head downward.

CHAPTER VI

THE FLOOD

1. *The Inmates of the Ark*

WHEN the days of the flood drew near, Methuselah the Just died, and the people heard a great cry in heaven. They also saw animals gather at the place where Methuselah had died and lament over him. They then said to one another: "Come, let us also lament over Methuselah, lest we shall be considered baser than the animals." They gathered around Methuselah and wept over him. When God saw this, He was so pleased that He postponed the flood for seven more days, the week of mourning for Methuselah. During these seven days of grace, God suspended the laws of nature, and caused the sun to rise in the west and to set in the east.

The people, however, soon forgot the wonderful things they had seen, and resumed their evil doings. God said to Noah: "Take all kinds of food and put it into the ark, and with thee thou shalt also take seven pair of all clean animals, and one pair of all unclean animals."

Noah said: "Master of the World, I have

never learned the art of hunting. How then am I able to bring into the ark all the animals and fowl?" God immediately ordered the angels to gather all beasts, animals and fowl, and bring them to Noah.

Among these animals there was a reem, only one day old, but very huge. Noah looked at the animal and said: "How can such a monster enter my ark?" He made a hole in the wall of the ark, put the head of the reem into it, and tied its horns fast to the ark. When the water of the flood increased, the reem floated upon the face of the water behind the ark.

Og, the king of Bashan, came to Noah, and begged him: "Pray have mercy upon me, and admit me to the ark." Noah looked at Og, and thought to himself: "Truly this giant has no cause to fear the flood, for should even the water reach to a very great height, it will only come to his ankles." But Og insisted, and Noah said to him: "Swear to me that you will deal kindly with my children." When Og swore, Noah permitted him to sit upon one of the logs which were projecting from the ark. Noah made a hole in the door of the ark, and through it he gave Og his daily food and water.

When Falsehood saw that the end of all creation had come, he came unto Noah and said: "Pray let me go into the ark." Noah said: "Thou knowest that only pairs are permitted to come into

the ark, and thou hast no mate with thee. Go, therefore, and look for thy kind."

Falsehood went away from the ark sadly, and met Injustice. Injustice said: "Whence are you coming, Falsehood?"

Falsehood was compelled to tell the truth for the first time in his life, and said to Injustice: "I came to Noah, and asked him to take me into the ark, but he refused and said: 'You shall not come to me unless you bring with you your kind.' Injustice, be you my mate, and we shall both come to the ark and be saved."

Injustice asked: "What reward will you give me if I grant your request?"

Falsehood replied: "Your reward will be very great, for I will give you all the wealth that I shall obtain by telling untruths." Injustice agreed. Both of them came to Noah, and he allowed them to come into the ark.

While in the ark, Falsehood accumulated great wealth by deceiving all those who were in it. But Injustice took all the wealth, and concealed it, and Falsehood was left poor, after all.

2. *Noah in the Ark*

The seven days of grace after the death of Methuselah had passed. When God saw that the people did not improve, He removed two stars from the Great Dipper, leaving two big openings in heaven through which the water came down in

torrents upon the earth. He also caused the fountains of the great deep to open, and great currents of water gushed forth. There was a fearful roar of thunder and lightning and the very earth shook.

When the water reached the ankles of Noah, he, together with his good wife Naamah, the daughter of Enosh, and his three sons, Shem, Ham and Japheth, and the wives of his sons, entered the ark. About seven hundred thousand men and women gathered around the ark. The mighty ones put their large feet upon the fountains of the deep to close them up, but were unable to do so. The weaker ones took their own children and threw them into the depths of the abyss, in order to stop the fountains. The water ceased to well forth for a short while, then it streamed forth again. The wicked still continued to throw their children into the depths of the abyss.

God, seeing the cruelty of the parents, rained upon them a flood of fire. Then all men ran to the ark and attempted to force their way into it. But as soon as they touched the ark, a fire appeared and scorched their feet, and they were compelled to retreat.

The sinful people then came to Noah and begged him for mercy, saying to him: "We are willing to return to God, and abandon our evil ways, only open the ark for us so that we may not die." Noah said: "For one hundred and twenty-seven years I asked you daily to improve your ways, but you

would not listen. God can not be mocked at or ridiculed. All the evils He has foretold will now come upon you."

Noah then closed the door of the ark, and the people again made an attempt to break into it. Then God sent lions against them, who drove them away from the ark.

When the water increased and began to toss the ark from side to side, and all inside were violently shaken up, the lions roared, the wolves howled, the kine lowed, and all the animals uttered cries of agony. Noah and his sons, too, thought that death was nigh and broke into tears and prayed to God. The rain came down for forty days and forty nights. At the end of this period God replaced the two stars in the open sockets of the Dipper and the flood ceased.

As long as the flood lasted, the sun and the moon were darkened and shed no light. The ark was illuminated by a precious stone, the light of which was more brilliant by night than by day. So Noah was able to distinguish between night and day.

During the flood all living beings on earth perished. At the end of the forty days, Noah wished to know if the water had diminished. He opened the window and said to the raven: "Go forth and see if the water has diminished."

"God dislikes me," complained the raven, "for He ordered that only two of my kind be brought into the ark. You too hate me, for you do not

choose, as messenger, a bird of the kind of which there are seven pairs in the ark, but send me, of whose kind there is only one pair. Now should I go out of the ark and perish by reason of cold or heat, my kind will be entirely destroyed from the face of the earth." But Noah insisted and the raven was compelled to do his bidding.

After leaving the ark, the raven saw the body of a dead man lying on the top of a tree. He flew to the corpse and began to peck at it. On seeing that, Noah refused to allow the raven to come back to the ark. God said to him: "Take the raven back to the ark, for some day, I shall make use of him."

"When will that be?" asked Noah. And God answered: "Within one thousand three hundred and fifty-nine years, a righteous man [the Prophet Elijah] will cause the heavens to be restrained, so that there will be no rain. That man will have to flee to the wilderness, because of the anger of his king, and I will then send the raven to bring him food."

Noah then sent forth the dove, but she could find no resting place and returned to the ark. Seven more days passed, and he again sent the dove out of the ark. The dove then went to the land of Israel, and God opened for her the gates of the Garden of Eden, where she saw the wonderful fruit trees, bearing the most delicious fruits. She also saw many other lovely things to eat, but

The water tossed the ark from side to side

she took only a bitter leaf from an olive tree, which grew upon the Mount of Olives in Jerusalem. When she plucked the leaf, she said: "It is better to receive a bitter leaf from the bountiful and merciful hand of God, than to receive dainties from the hands of men."

While in the ark, Noah and his three sons had no rest, for there were some animals and fowl that had to be fed by day, while others had to be fed by night. The little zikta refused to accept any food from the hands of Noah, and he was greatly worried and grieved, because he did not know what its food was. He gave it vegetables and all kinds of fruits, but it refused to eat them.

One day Noah opened a pomegranate, and a little worm dropped out. When the little zikta saw the worm, it hurried to it and devoured it. Noah was pleased on finding the right kind of food for the zikta, and from that day on he gave it all kinds of vegetables that had many worms in them.

As Noah went about feeding the animals and fowl, a great noise arose in the ark. Noah looked around and noticed that while all living things were demanding their food from him, the urshana was sleeping in the corner of the ark. Noah awoke the urshana from his sleep and asked: "Why did you not demand your daily food from me?"

The urshana replied: "I noticed how hard you

were working to feed all the inhabitants of the ark, and therefore thought I would rather suffer hunger than add to your already hard task."

When Noah heard these words, he said to the urshana: "Because you were so considerate, I bless you and hope that you may live forever." God listened to the prayer of Noah and granted his wish.

One day Noah forgot to give the lion his portion of food. The hungry beast became enraged and struck Noah so violent a blow with his paw that he was lame forever after.

3. *Noah Leaves the Ark*

One year had passed and Noah and his children in the ark saw that the water of the flood had entirely disappeared from the face of the earth. God then said to Noah: "Go out from the ark, thou, thy wife, thy sons, and thy sons' wives with thee. Let also all living things that are in the ark go out with thee."

When Noah stepped out of the ark, he began to weep bitterly at the sight of the great destruction the flood had wrought, and he said to God: "O Lord of the world! Thou art called the Merciful, and Thou shouldst have mercy upon Thy creatures."

"O thou foolish shepherd," answered God, "is it only now thou bethinkest thyself to speak to Me? When I told thee that I would bring a flood

to destroy all living things because of their wickedness, thou saidest nothing unto Me. But thou wert satisfied because thou wast assured of safety, and thou didst not concern thyself about the ruin that the flood would bring. Now when thou art saved and the world is already laid waste, thou beggest for mercy."

Noah realized his error and he brought an offering to God that his sin might be forgiven. God accepted his offering and blessed him. God was so pleased with Noah's repentance, that He promised him not to destroy the earth again by a flood. As a token of this, God set the rainbow in the clouds.

Noah then began to till the ground and plant it. He found the vine which Adam had taken with him from the Garden of Eden when he was driven out. He tasted the grapes upon it, and finding them good to eat, he decided to grow them. While engaged in this work, Satan presented himself to Noah.

"What art thou planting here, Noah?" inquired Satan.

"I am planting a vineyard," replied Noah.

"What good is a vineyard to thee?" asked Satan again.

"The vine produces fruit which is good to eat; from it I can also make wine, which gladdens the heart of man," said Noah.

"I will help thee plant thy vineyard," Satan

offered. He brought a lamb, a lion, a pig and a monkey, killed these four animals in succession, and made the blood flow under the vine. Satan thus showed Noah that when a man drinks no wine at all, he is compared to the innocent lamb that does no evil and causes no destruction; if he drinks one cup of wine, he feels as strong as a lion; if he drinks two cups, he resembles the pig that wallows in the mud; and if he drinks three or more cups and gets drunk, he behaves like a monkey, dancing, singing and knowing not what he is doing.

Chapter VII

THE TOWER OF BABEL

UPON the death of Adam and Eve, their wonderful clothes of skin, which had been made by the hand of God in the Garden of Eden, were inherited by Enoch, and when he was taken to heaven, he gave the coats of skin to his son Methuselah. When Methuselah died, Noah took possession of the coats and kept them in the ark. While going out of the ark, Ham stole the coats from his father, and gave them to his son Cush who, in turn, kept them hidden for a long time. Cush gave the coats as a present to his son Nimrod, when Nimrod was twenty years old.

Nimrod put on one of the coats, and went into the forest. All the animals, cattle and fowl bowed down before him. The people were greatly astonished when they saw this, and said to one another: "Surely Nimrod is the mightiest man that ever lived, for all the animals of the field fear him. Come, therefore, let us make him king over us, so that he may protect us from our enemies."

When Nimrod ascended the throne, he said to his people: "Come, let us build a tower the top

of which shall reach into the heavens. God has taken the heavens for Himself, and to us He gave only the earth. When we build the tower, we shall be able to go into heaven, fight with God, and put our own idols there. We will remain there until we shall be as mighty as God Himself. If God withholds the water, so that no rain comes down, we shall make holes in heaven so that the water may come down. We will take our god, Ahuz, put a sharp sword in his hands, place him on the top of the tower, and he shall be a symbol to all future generations that there exists an everlasting war between God and the idols."

The people were pleased with Nimrod's plan, and cried: "Long live King Nimrod and his wise counsels!" They at once began to build the tower.

Many, many years were spent in building the tower. Day and night they worked on the tower until it attained such a great height, that to the people at the top the highest trees appeared like the smallest blades of grass.

At last the tower was so high that it took a year to mount it. When a man fell down from the top of the tower and was killed, nobody ever took notice of it. But when a brick dropped, the builders would assemble and lament over it saying: "Alas, when will there be another brick to replace it?"

God looked down from heaven and said: "Verily, the people are bad, but I will not destroy

them, because they love one another, and live in peace." God then confounded their language, and no man understood the holy tongue which they had used hitherto. One man would ask for some water, and his companion would hand him a brick, and when he would ask for bricks, he would receive water, because his language was not understood. Angered by the disappointment, he would throw a brick at his partner, and kill him. Many people were killed in this manner, and they finally stopped building the tower.

God changed the heads of those builders who intended to fight Him into those of monkeys, and the rest of the people He scattered all over the globe. A fire then came out from heaven and burned one-third of the tower, the earth opened its mouth and swallowed one-third of it, and the remainder of the great structure lay scattered upon the ground.

Chapter VIII

ABRAHAM

1. *The Star in the East*

IN the court of King Nimrod there was a high official whose name was Terah. When Terah was seventy years old, his wife Emtelai bore a son to him. That babe was our father Abraham.

On the day Abraham was born, Terah made a great feast, and all the servants and all the wise men of Nimrod came to the house of Terah. At night, while returning home from the house of Terah, they noticed a great star coming from the east, brightening the entire sky. They looked at the great sight in astonishment. While they were thus gazing at the star, it suddenly shot from the east across the sky and swallowed up the four stars at the four corners of the heaven. Then the magicians said to one another: "This can mean nothing else but that the son that was born to Terah will become very great. He will slay many powerful nations, and he will take possession of the entire world."

In the morning the magicians went and told King Nimrod of the wonderful omen they had seen and its meaning. Nimrod was terrified, and said:

"What is your advice, my councillors? What shall we do?"

The magicians answered: "Buy the child from Terah for any sum he desires. When it shall be in our hands, we will kill it."

"Your advice is good," answered Nimrod. "Let one of you go and get Terah here."

When Terah came before the king, he bowed and said: "What is your wish, O King?"

"The son which was born to you yesternight will destroy many powerful nations and will take possession of the entire world," replied the king. "Now take as much gold and silver as you like, and give me your boy, so that I may kill him, before evil comes upon us from him."

"O King, will you permit me to speak a few words to you?" said Terah.

"Speak on," said Nimrod.

"The other day one of your servants came to me," continued Terah, "and said: 'Give me the mule which the king has given you as a present, and I will give you a stable full of straw and fodder.' I told the man that I would not do anything without the advice of the king. Tell me, then, O King, shall I accept the man's offer or not?"

Nimrod replied: "Oh, what a fool you are! What use can you have for the straw and fodder, if you have no mule to eat it?"

"Of what use, then, will the gold and silver be to me," said Terah, "if I have no heir to inherit it from me?"

The king grew very angry at these words. When Terah saw that the wrath of the king had been kindled, he said: "The King may act as it seems good to him. Let him take my son without any reward."

"No," said the king, "but I want to buy your child from you at a great price."

"O King," said Terah, "pray give me three days' time to consider the matter and to comfort my wife Emtelai, who greatly rejoices over our child. After the three days have expired, you may send for my son."

"Your wish is granted, O Terah," said the king.

Terah went home and told his wife of the king's command. She wept bitterly and did not eat for three days and three nights, neither did she drink or sleep.

On the third day the king's servants came into the house of Terah and said: "Give up your child as you have promised. If you refuse, you shall die a horrible death, together with all your household in your house. Not even a dog shall be spared."

The king's messengers were in great haste to

fulfill the orders of the king, and they would not allow Terah to even speak a single word.

Terah then took one of his servants' children that was born on the same day with Abraham, and gave it to the king's servants. They brought the babe to the king, and he, thinking that it was Abraham, took the child and dashed its head against the ground. Abraham's mother took the real babe in her arms and left the city in great terror.

She wandered toward the desert and walked along the edge of the valley, until she came to a cave.

She entered this hiding-place and, weeping bitterly, said to little Abraham: "Alas, that you have been born at a time when the wicked Nimrod is king. If he hears that you are alive, he will surely kill you. Better that you should perish in this cave, than that my eyes should see you killed by the brutal king." She then took the garment in which she was clothed, and wrapping it about the boy, she abandoned him in the cave, saying: "May our merciful gods be with you and never forsake you."

Little Abraham was very hungry and wept bitterly, but God sent down the angel Gabriel to take care of him. The angel made milk flow from the little finger of Abraham's right hand and nursed Abraham with it.

2. *Abraham Acknowledges God*

When Abraham was three years old, he crept out of the cave at night, and walked along the edge of the valley. He looked up to heaven and seeing the stars for the first time, he said to himself: "How beautiful and lovely are these dots. Surely these dots are the gods who created this beautiful world."

Little Abraham prayed to the stars the entire night. When dawn came, the stars disappeared. Then Abraham said: "I will not worship these, because they are not gods."

When the sun came forth and little Abraham saw the whole world lit up by its rays, he said: "Now surely this is a god, and him will I serve." When the sun set, and there was darkness upon the face of the earth, little Abraham said, on beholding the moon: "Perhaps this is god," and he prayed to the moon. When dawn broke and the moon disappeared, little Abraham was puzzled and cried out: "This, too, is no god. But who then is the god who created this beautiful world?"

He was thus thinking to himself, when the angel Gabriel appeared and greeted him: "Peace be with thee."

"With thee be peace also," returned Abraham. "Who art thou?"

"I am the angel Gabriel, the messenger of God," was the reply.

The angel brought Abraham to a fountain of water and said to him: "Wash thyself in this fountain so that thou mayest become clean."

Abraham did so. Then Gabriel told him that the One who created heaven and earth, and gives life to all living things is the God in heaven. "This is God, and Him shalt thou worship," the angel explained.

When little Abraham heard the words of the angel, he bowed down, and knelt in prayer to God, the Creator of heaven and earth.

Meanwhile Abraham's mother thought of him in sorrow and tears, and she went forth from the city to seek the cave in which she had abandoned him. Not finding her son there, she wept bitterly and said: "Oh, my dear little Abraham! Woe unto me that I bore you to become the prey of wild beasts, of the bears and the lions."

While she was thus talking to herself, a boy came along and said: "Whom are you looking for, my good woman?"

"I am looking for my little boy Abraham, whom I left here three years ago," she said.

"Mother!" Abraham exclaimed. "Sorrow not; he is alive. I am the same Abraham whom you left here three years ago. The merciful God in heaven has saved me from death."

"Who is the God you are speaking of?" asked the astonished mother. "Is there a God besides Nimrod and the idols?"

"Yes, mother," answered little Abraham, "the God of heaven and the God of earth. He is also the God of Nimrod."

The mother then wept for joy, and taking Abraham by his arm led him home.

3. *Abraham and the Idols*

Terah, Abraham's father, had become a dealer in idols.

One day Terah said: "Abraham, my son, here is a basket full of idols. Go to the market-place and sell them to the people."

When Abraham came to the market-place, an old man approached him and said: "Sell me the mightiest god you have in your basket." Abraham, pointing to the biggest idol he had, said: "For this mighty god you will have to give me all the money you have with you." The old man was happy, took out all the money he had, and gave it to Abraham.

When the old man was about to go away, Abraham called after him and said: "Pray tell me how old are you?"

"I am sixty years old to-day," answered the old man.

"This idol is only one day old," said Abraham, "and you, a man of sixty years of age, wish to bow down to it and worship it."

"Give me my money back," exclaimed the old man, "and here is your idol."

Then an old woman came and said to Abraham: "Please choose for me a good and big idol, and I will worship and love it. I had many gods in my house, but last night when I left the house, thieves came in and stole all the gods I had."

Abraham smiled and said: "You silly woman! your gods were unable to save themselves from the hands of the thieves, and now you want to buy other idols, and bow down to them and worship them."

"You are certainly speaking truthfully," said the old woman, "but tell me, pray, whom else can I worship?"

"Worship the God in heaven, who created the whole world," said Abraham. The woman thanked him and went away.

Abraham then took the big idols, put a rope around their necks, and with their faces downward, he dragged them along the ground, crying aloud all the time: "Who will buy from me an idol which has a mouth but it speaks not; eyes, but it sees not; ears, but it hears not?"

When Abraham was older, his father said to him one day: "My son, stay at home and take care of the idols that are in the house, because you are not able to sell any of them in the market-place."

A certain woman came to Terah's house at this time and said to Abraham: "Here is some flour which I have brought for your gods. Please give it to them to eat."

When the woman went out, Abraham took a hatchet and, repeating the words, "The Eternal, He is God, The Eternal, He is God," he began to break the idols. He started with the biggest and with the smallest he ended. He hacked off the feet of one, and the hands of another, until there was hardly a whole one left. Abraham then put the hatchet into the hand of the largest idol and went out.

When Terah returned home and saw all the idols broken he grew very angry and called to Abraham:

"Why have you broken all my idols?"

"I did not do it," Abraham said. "It was the largest idol who shattered all the rest. A certain woman came and brought a meat offering for your idols, and I set it before them to eat. The idols began to quarrel among themselves and each one wanted to get it first. Their behavior angered the big god, so he took a hatchet and killed them all. Can you not see him standing there holding a hatchet in his hand? And if you will not believe my words, ask him, and he will tell you."

"You speak lies to me!" exclaimed Terah in great fury. "These gods can neither eat nor drink nor do anything. Are they not wood and stone? And have I not myself made them? They cannot do the things you speak of. It is you who broke them and you who placed the hatchet in the hands of the big god."

"You speak truly," exclaimed Abraham. "The idols are nothing but wood and stone; but how then, O father, can you worship these idols, in whom there is no power to do anything? Can these idols deliver you from your troubles? Can they hear your prayers?" And after having spoken these words, Abraham took the hatchet from the big god and smashed it, too.

4. *Abraham in the Fiery Furnace*

Then Terah hastened to Nimrod, and bowing down before him said:

"O mighty king, the son that was born to me dissuades all the people from worshiping idols and even from worshiping thee, the mighty god Nimrod."

"Cause him to be brought here at once," exclaimed Nimrod in great anger.

Abraham was soon brought before Nimrod, who said to him:

"Are you Abraham, the son of Terah?"

"Yes, O king, I am," answered Abraham.

"Why do you dissuade my servants from worshiping my idols and me?" cried the king angrily. "Go, Abraham, and worship fire, because fire is the strongest and best god of all."

"I would rather worship water," Abraham spoke fearlessly, "because water extinguishes fire."

"Let it be as you say," Nimrod returned. "Worship water."

"I will worship the clouds, because they contain the water," continued Abraham.

"Bow down to the clouds, then," said Nimrod.

"The sun is stronger and mightier than the clouds, because he can disperse them quickly."

"Worship me then," commanded Nimrod. "Know you not that I have created the whole world, and that I am the true God?"

"Permit your servant to ask one question," Abraham begged.

"Proceed, you have my permission," said the king.

"Who created the sun?" asked Abraham.

"I did," answered the king.

"And who placed him in heaven?"

"Surely I," came from the haughty Nimrod.

"And who causes the sun to rise from the east, and set in the west?"

"None but me," replied the king.

"If you have control of the sun, O Nimrod, make him rise to-morrow in the west, and set in the east," said Abraham. "If you are able to do this, I will gladly bow down to you, and I will admit that you are a true god."

Then the king waxed furious.

"Away with you," he cried; and he ordered Abraham to be put in prison.

At the end of ten days the king caused all the princes and the great men of his kingdom to appear before him.

"What shall be done to Abraham?" asked the king.

"Let him be placed in the midst of fire, which we worship, and we shall see if his God will come down from heaven and save him," was their advice.

Nimrod ordered a big fire to be built at Kasdim and kept burning for three days and three nights; and into this hot furnace Abraham was to be thrown.

At the end of three days Abraham was brought to the furnace. All the people of the land, men, women and children, came to see what would be done to the idol-breaker. When Abraham was brought forth, the wise men recognized him and said to the king: "O King, this is the man that appeared in the shape of a star, on the day he was born."

At the command of the king, Abraham was stripped of his clothes, his hands and feet were tied and he was thrown into the burning furnace. At that moment the angel Gabriel appeared before God, and said: "O Mighty God, permit me to fly down to the earth, and extinguish the fire in the furnace, and save Abraham, Thy beloved."

God said: "There is none like Me in heaven, and there is none like Abraham on earth. Therefore I shall save Abraham Myself. And as for thee," God continued, "thou hast intended to do

a kind act. I shall therefore permit thee to save three other righteous men from being destroyed by fire."

Justice came before God, and prostrating itself, said: "O Merciful God, spare Abraham, for he is the only man who can do justice. If he is killed, who will care for me?"

Immediately God spoke, saying: "Fire, cool off and bring happiness to My servant Abraham."

No water was needed to quench the fire. The logs burst into bloom, the fire in the furnace became grass, and the flames were turned into beautiful trees, which bore lovely blossoms and fruits. In this beautiful orchard Abraham stayed for three days and three nights, and prayed to God in heaven in these words: "Have pity upon the people who desired to do me evil. Give them a pure heart, and open their eyes, so that they may do what is good and righteous in Thine eyes."

On the third day Nimrod and the princes and his servants stood around the furnace, and saw Abraham walking through the rows of beautiful trees. "Come out of the furnace," exclaimed the astonished king, "for I shall do you no harm." Abraham went out and presented himself before the king.

"Tell me, O Abraham," said the king, "why fire cannot burn you, and why the flames were turned into a beautiful orchard, the like of which I have never seen?"

"It is because I believe and trust in the God of heaven and earth," answered Abraham. "He saved me from death."

The king and the princes immediately arose and bowed down to Abraham. Abraham said: "Bow not to me, but bow to the God who created heaven and earth, because in His hands are the destinies of all beings." Then they all gave Abraham presents of gold, silver and precious stones. Nimrod sent him away with great honors and gave him two slaves from the royal palace. Ogi was the name of the one, and the name of the other was Eliezer.

Three hundred men came to Abraham and said: "We are your servants. We will go wherever you send us, and we will do whatever you tell us to do."

5. *Nimrod's Dream*

For two years Abraham and his good wife Sarah dwelt happily in the land of the Chaldees, teaching the people to believe in God and to be kind to one another. At the end of the two years, Nimrod dreamt a dream. In his dream he saw himself passing with his army through a certain valley and finally arriving near the furnace into which Abraham had been cast. A man, who looked just like Abraham, sprang out of the furnace and faced Nimrod with a drawn sword. Nimrod tried to escape, but the man threw an egg at his head, and the egg broke and a great river flowed forth from

it. In that river all the men of the king's army were drowned. The king tried to run away from the river, but suddenly the river changed into an egg again, as at first. From that egg a little bird came out and perched on the head of the king, and with its sharp beak pecked out one of his eyes.

Nimrod, on awakening, became greatly alarmed. He at once summoned all his wise men to come and tell him the meaning of his dream. One of the magicians stood up and said: "O King, the interpretation of your dream may not please you, but alas! it is a true one. The little bird that pecked your eye out, is none other than Abraham, and the river wherein your men were drowned stands for the generations to come. There will come a time when the children of Abraham will have all your land, and take possession of your country. Know then, O King, that as long as the son of Terah is alive, you and your kingdom will not be safe."

The king, on hearing the interpretation of the dream, at once sent some of his servants to kill Abraham. Eliezer, the servant of Abraham, happened to be at the royal court at the time and heard the decree of the king. With great haste he ran to Abraham and said: "Oh, master, escape at once, for a decree has been issued by the king that you be killed forthwith."

Abraham ran to the house of Noah and Shem, where he remained in hiding for a whole month.

The king's messengers looked for Abraham high and low, but in vain. They came to the king and said: "Abraham is gone, and cannot be found."

Terah then visited his son in his hiding-place and said: "My son, it is time for us to escape from this city, so that your life may be saved from the hands of Nimrod." And because of his good advice, God rewarded him and prolonged his days, so that he could see Abraham's greatness and glory for thirty-five years more.

Abraham listened to his father's advice, and he, together with his father, his wife Sarah. and his nephew Lot, departed for Haran.

6. *Abraham's Departure*

When God said to Abraham, "Get thee out from the land of thy birth, and from thy father's house, so that thy greatness may be known over the whole world," Abraham replied: "Oh merciful God, how can I go away, and leave my old father by himself? Who will provide him with food and drink? Who will take care of him? Will not the people talk about me and say: 'Abraham, who teaches others to be good, leaves his old father in Haran without care, and goes away!'" God said: "Go thou, as I have commanded thee, and I will take care of thine old father."

Encouraged by God's promise, Abraham, together with his wife Sarah and his nephew Lot, set out for the land which God would show him.

On his way, when the sun was not shining and it was dark, the Star of Righteousness shone brightly above him.

Abraham passed through many lands, and as he passed through Mesopotamia and Aramnaharaim, he saw that the people there were idlers. They were continually engaged in eating, drinking, and feasting. Abraham then said: "O merciful God, may it be Thy will that my portion be not in this land of idle people."

Abraham then passed through the land of Canaan. There he saw that the inhabitants from young to old were engaged in work, tilling the ground, and reaping its harvest. Abraham rejoiced at this pleasant sight and said: "Merciful God, may it be Thy will that my portion be in this land." God then spoke to him and said: "Unto thy children will I give this land."

Abraham continued his journey through the land of Canaan, and wherever he came he built an altar to God, and induced the people to be kind to one another and to worship the true God in heaven.

7. *Abraham in Egypt*

Scarcely had Abraham settled in Canaan when a famine broke out in the land. He was compelled to leave Canaan and he departed for Egypt. On his way from Canaan to Egypt, Abraham said to his wife: "When the Egyptians see how beautiful you

are, they will kill me, and take you away. I will put you in a casket that no harm befall me because of you." When he approached the Egyptian border, he put his wife Sarah into a big casket. The king's tax collectors came to Abraham and said: "You must give us one-tenth of whatever you have as taxes to the king." When Abraham consented to the request, they said to him: "What have you in that casket? Perhaps you have barley there, then you must give us one-tenth of it."

"I am ready to give you one-tenth of barley," said Abraham.

The officers said: "Perhaps you have wheat there?"

Abraham replied: "Very well, then I will give you one-tenth of wheat."

"Perhaps you have pepper there," they said.

"I will give you then one-tenth of pepper," replied Abraham.

The officers, surprised at Abraham's willingness to give one-tenth of whatever they chose, grew suspicious and said: "Who knows, perhaps you have golden shekels there?"

"I am ready to give you whatever you say to me," said Abraham.

"We cannot consent to your offers," said the king's officers at last. "Open the casket and let us examine what it contains."

They forced the casket open, and found Sarah lying there. So astonished were they at her

beauty, that they at once took her to the king. Pharaoh was so bewitched by her charms that he gave precious gifts to the officers who had brought her to him. The king inquired who the man was in whose company Sarah had come to Egypt. Upon receiving the reply that he was her brother, the king gave him much gold and silver, sheep and oxen, and many slaves. He even gave Sarah his own daughter Hagar as a slave.

Soon Pharaoh, his nobles, and his servants were afflicted with a terrible disease on account of Sarah. Terror-stricken by the plague, he sent for Abraham and said: "Why did you tell me she was your sister, when in truth she is your wife? Now take your wife and go." Having stayed two months in Egypt, Abraham returned to Canaan.

8. *The Shepherds of Lot*

Abraham possessed many cattle and sheep, and so did his nephew Lot. Abraham told his shepherds that they must have their sheep and cattle muzzled when passing through strange fields, so that they might not graze in fields not belonging to him.

When Abraham's shepherds saw that the cattle of Lot were pasturing in strange fields, they said to Lot's shepherds: "Why do you do a thing like that?"

Lot's shepherds then replied: "God promised Abraham that to him and to his children He will

give the entire country. Abraham has no children to settle in the land. Therefore when he dies, without leaving any children, his nephew Lot will be his sole heir, and he and his children will take possession of the land. Lot's cattle are therefore pasturing in fields belonging to their master." God then spoke: "To Abraham's seed will I give this land, but only after the seven nations dwelling in this land shall have been destroyed. To-day it still belongs to those nations."

When Abraham heard about the quarrel, he said to Lot: "My brother, let us not quarrel. You may choose whatever place you prefer. If you go to the right, I will go to the left, and if you choose the left, I will go to the right." Lot thereupon separated himself from Abraham. He chose the cities of Sodom, while Abraham dwelt in the land of Canaan.

9. *The War of the Kings*

Abraham, through his kind deeds and hospitality, became known to all men that lived upon the face of the earth. All the kings grew jealous of Abraham because of his fame and wealth.

One day they held a conference and said: "We must get rid of Abraham, so that our subjects shall cease talking about his greatness and kindness." One of the kings said: "It is impossible to kill Abraham, for should we try it, all his friends would come to his aid, and perhaps kill us. It

would be best, according to my advice, to make war against the kings of Sodom and take his nephew Lot into captivity. When Abraham comes out to rescue his nephew, we can then dispose of him."

The other kings agreed to his advice, and they waged war upon the five godless kings, Bera the villain, king of Sodom; Birsha the sinner, king of Gomorrah; Shinab the father-hater, king of Adamah; Shemeber the wicked, king of Zeboim, and the king of Bela, the city that devoured its inhabitants. These five kings were defeated in war and their wives and children were taken prisoners. Lot and his wife and children were also taken into captivity.

Michael, the angel, at once came to Abraham and said: "Thine enemies have defeated the kings of Sodom and the neighboring countries, and have taken captive thy nephew Lot." When Abraham heard this report, he was greatly grieved. He called together his trained servants, gave them gold and silver and said: "Let us go and save the people from the hands of their captors. I charge you not to think of gold and other spoils, but to care only for the safety of men's lives. Try to rescue my nephew Lot and his family from his captors."

The distance between Abraham and the kings was great, but God performed a miracle. Abraham marched forth with giant strides, each of his

steps measuring four miles. Thus Abraham overtook his enemy in a very short time.

When the kings turned around and saw Abraham and his men, they threw their swords and spears at them, but God changed the swords into dust, and the spears into straw. But when Abraham threw back the dust and straw at his enemies, they turned into swords and spears and killed many of them. When the kings saw this, they began to flee for their lives, leaving behind them all the captives and the booty they had taken.

The defeated kings then gathered in the valley of Shaveh and said to one another: "Let us make Abraham ruler over us, and he shall be our king and god." They cut down cedars, fashioned a huge throne and waited for Abraham to come there.

When Abraham arrived, they bowed down before him, made him sit on the throne which they had built, and they all exclaimed: "You are our prince! You are our king! You are our god!"

Abraham saw their exultation and said: "God forbid that I be your king, or your god. I am but a man, just like any one of you. If you do desire to reward me, let this be my reward: that you love one another, live together in peace, and open wide the doors of your houses for the needy, the suffering, and the wayfarer. Pray to the God that created heaven and earth, and serve Him with all your heart. For it is not with the power of my

hands that I have succeeded in this battle. It is God in heaven that was my shield."

When Abraham had uttered these words, the sweet voices of angels were heard in heaven chanting this prayer to God: "Blessed art Thou, O Lord, the shield of Abraham."

10. *Four Visions*

Shortly after the war with the kings, God raised Abraham above the vault of the skies, and said to him: "Raise thine eyes and look at the countless stars; so shall be the number of thy children."

When the sun was about to set, a deep sleep came over Abraham, and the word of the Lord came to him in a vision: "What seest thou, Abraham?"

Abraham replied: "I see men, women and children approaching a great sea, and they are hotly pursued by a very large army consisting of chariots, horses and horsemen. I heard the sound of trumpets, I see the water in the sea divide, and they that are pursued cross the sea upon the dry ground, and the pursuers follow into the sea and are covered by its mighty waters."

"They who cross the sea safely are thy children," said God.

Then Abraham beheld another vision: a man whose face resembled the brightness of the sun was standing on the top of a mountain; men,

women and children were standing at the foot of the mountain; the mountain was wrapped in flame and smoke, thunders and lightnings followed one another in succession, and letters of fire were flying about in space.

"What is the meaning of all this?" inquired Abraham.

"Thy children are receiving my Law on the mount of Sinai," replied God.

Then another vision appeared before Abraham. He beheld the sun shining brightly on a large city; men, women and children were walking about gayly in its streets; a temple of most exquisite beauty stood on the top of a mountain; men attired in beautiful garments were playing musical instruments and singing most wonderful songs; and priests were sacrificing offerings, and kneeling and praying to God.

"Thy children are thus worshiping Me, in My temple," explained God.

Suddenly the vision of brightness and joy gave way to one of darkness and despair, and Abraham saw men, women, and children walk barefoot and with scant clothes on them, and surrounded and driven by a merciless band. Heartrending sobs and cries were heard from the pursued, but these were answered by the pursuers with mockery, laughter and severe beatings.

"Alas, what is the meaning of all this?" cried out Abraham in great anxiety.

"This is exile, alien rule," replied God.

And denser grew the darkness, and Abraham was granted yet another vision. He beheld smoking furnaces, flaming torches, streams of black fire and streams of fire resembling blood, mountains of snow and hail, and terrible angels. He heard groans of pain and suffering and terror which penetrated from one end of the heavens to the other.

"What does this signify?" asked Abraham in great astonishment.

"This represents Gehenna, Hell, which I prepared for the sinners," answered God. "As long as thy children study the Law, observe its commandments, and perform the services in the Temple, I shall be their God and they shall not be exiled nor will they have to suffer the tortures of Gehenna. But I know that they will in the future disobey Me and neglect the study of the Torah; therefore have I shown thee, Abraham, the two punishments, exile and Gehenna, that thou mayest choose whether they shall be punished by one or the other punishment."

All day long he wavered, but finally he chose exile, foreign rule, as the punishment for his children.

11. *The Visit of the Angels*

Abraham made a tent, with doors opening on all sides, so that the wayfarer might enter it, no mat-

ter from which direction he came, and eat of his bread.

One day Abraham was very sick and was unabie to wait upon strangers. God therefore took out the sun from its sheath, and made the days so hot that no one was able to go out of the house. "My servant Abraham is sick," said God, "let no stranger enter his house and disturb him."

When Abraham saw that no one entered his house, he was greatly vexed. He called his servant Eliezer to him, and said: "I am sick and unable to go out of my house. Go outside, look around and see if you cannot find any wayfarers. If you see any one pass by, ask him to come to the house of Abraham, where he may rest from his wearisome journey, and refresh himself."

Eliezer bowed and departed to comply with his master's request. He looked in every direction and seeing no one pass by, he returned and said: "Master, I saw no one pass by."

Abraham was greatly worried and said to himself: "Who knows, perhaps Eliezer has not fulfilled my request with all his heart? I will go out myself, and see whether in truth there is no one passing by to-day."

Abraham, in spite of his illness and the scorching heat, then went outside and looked east, north, west, and south, and when he saw nobody passing, he was greatly grieved. He said to himself: "Perhaps there are some wayfarers traveling in the

desert who are tortured by the scorching rays of the sun."

When God saw the anxiety of his servant Abraham, He sent down to him three angels in the form of human beings. They were the angels Michael, Gabriel, and Raphael. Raphael was sent down to cure Abraham of his sickness, Michael was to bring Sarah the glad news that by next year a son would be born to her, and Gabriel was to destroy the wicked cities of Sodom and Gomorrah.

While Abraham was sitting at the door of his tent, watching for some strangers to pass by, he saw the three angels in human form approaching. He quickly ran to meet them. When he saw that the three men spoke kindly to one another, he said to himself: "Surely God has caused three good men to come to my house to-day." He bowed to them, and said: "If I have found favor in your eyes, do not pass away from your servant, but stay with me until your hearts are refreshed."

Abraham gave the men water to wash their feet, which were covered with dust and dirt from their long journey, and then asked them to sit under a tree in the garden. He gave them bread, and hastening to his wife Sarah, asked her to prepare cakes. On account of his great joy over his guests, Abraham forgot his suffering and ran to the flock, to fetch cattle for meat.

He approached a calf, and the calf seeing Abra-

ham, ran away from him. Abraham followed the calf until it reached a certain cave. The calf entered the cave and hid there. Abraham followed the calf, and on entering the cave, he saw the bodies of Adam and Eve lying on their beds, but they looked as though they were sleeping peacefully. He saw many lights that were shining brightly all over the cave, and he scented fragrant odors, resembling the odors that came from the Garden of Eden. Abraham said to himself: "When I am about to die, I will buy this cave, and I will pay whatever amount they ask for it."

Abraham took the calf, brought it home, and gave it to his son Ishmael, to prepare savory meat for the guests. "Let the boy get accustomed," said Abraham to himself, "to serve wayfarers, and deal kindly with them." When God saw the generous acts of Abraham, He said: "If the angels that came to Abraham's house do not eat and do not drink, Abraham will feel greatly worried. I will therefore open the mouths of the angels, like those of men, so that Abraham may rejoice." The angels then ate and drank, and Abraham stood beneath the tree, ready to serve them.

God then said to Abraham: "Because thou didst give water to strangers, and shelter in the shadow of the trees, and because thou didst give them bread, meat, butter, and milk, and didst stand by them ready to serve them, therefore will I grant these things to thy children: When they shall wan-

der in the wilderness, and have no water to drink, a fountain of water shall follow them. When they shall be traveling, and be scorched by the hot rays of the sun, I will put a cloud above them to shelter them from the heat. When they shall be far away from an inhabited land and suffer hunger, I will cause manna to come down for them from heaven, and thus give them food. When they shall come to the promised land, they will find fountains and streams; their sheep and cattle shall increase, and their houses shall be full of good things."

When the angels had finished their meal, one of them said: "Know thou, Abraham, that by next year thy wife Sarah shall bear a son unto thee." The three most welcome guests were ready to depart and Abraham accompanied them on the way.

Chapter IX

THE CITIES OF SIN

1. *Their Laws and Judges*

THE men of Sodom, Gomorrah and the three other cities of the plain were very rich, because their lands were fertile, and in them were found all the treasures of silver, gold, and precious stones. When a Sodomite told his servants to go into the garden and bring him some vegetables, they would dig up the ground and find gold.

When the Sodomites grew extremely rich, they became very wicked, forgot the true God in heaven, and instead worshiped the sun, moon, and stars. They passed a law not to permit any poor man to enter the city, for fear that their wealth might be diminished. Furthermore, they were even envious of the little birds that came to eat from their trees. So they cut down all the trees and said: "Let no living thing enjoy the fruit of our trees."

They appointed several wicked men as judges and officers over them, and if any stranger happened to come there, they robbed him of everything he had. These wicked people passed a law,

that any man or woman who was caught giving alms to the poor should be put to death.

The Sodomites appointed four judges over them, whose names were, Liar, Deceiver, Falsifier, and Perverter of Justice. And these were the laws they passed: Everyone in the city had to pasture the cattle of the city. If he was a rich man, and had cattle of his own, he had to pasture the cattle of the city for one day only; but if he was a poor man, and had no cattle of his own, he had to mind the cattle for two days. If a man crossed the river by way of the bridge or ford, he had to pay four zuzim to the city, but if he waded through the water, he had to pay eight zuzim. If a man cut the ear off his neighbor's donkey, the donkey must stay in his house, until his ear healed. If a man hit another and caused him to bleed, the one that was hit had to pay his assailant for having performed the operation of cupping, which was considered a cure. If a man made a feast and invited a stranger to come to it, they punished him by taking away all the clothes he had.

One day officers came to a poor orphan, and said to him: "Lo, you are a poor boy, and possess nothing, therefore you must pasture the cattle of the city for two days." The boy took the cattle to pasture, then he took a knife, and killed all the cattle.

When the people of Sodom became aware of that, they came running to the field. The boy said

to them: "He who is rich and possesses an ox, shall take but one skin, and he who is poor and has no ox, shall take two skins." The men were very angry, and said: "Is it not enough that you have killed our cattle, but you must take the skins and give them to the poor?" The orphan said: "I did the same as you did. For he who had no ox had to pasture two days, therefore let him have two skins, and he who had an ox and had to pasture only one day, let him have but one skin." The Sodomites were ashamed of the example their own practice had set, and went away crestfallen.

Once a stranger happened to come to Sodom. The Sodomites caught him and said: "Come on, pay four zuzim for crossing the bridge. The stranger said: "I did not cross the bridge, but I simply waded through the water."

"Oh, if that is the case," they said, "you must pay eight zuzim to the city." On his refusing to pay the Sodomites hit him so hard, that he bled. They brought him to the judges and told them what had happened. The judges heard their complaint and exclaimed: "Oh, you rascal, you must pay at once the eight zuzim for crossing the river on foot, and you must also pay these people for their hard labor in making you bleed."

One day Eliezer, the servant of Abraham, happened to come to Sodom. He saw one of the people trying to rob a stranger, and he said to the robber: "Go away, and leave this man alone."

Seeing that the robber refused to do so, Eliezer seized him and pulled him away by force. The robber grew angry at Eliezer, picked up a stone, and threw it at his head, making him bleed. When the Sodomite saw Eliezer bleed, he danced for joy and shouted: "Now you must pay me a big sum of money for performing the operation of cupping!"

"You are insane," Eliezer said; "you have struck me and for that you wish to be paid?"

The Sodomite said: "Surely you are a stranger here, and you are not acquainted with the laws of the land. You must come with me to the judge."

They went to the judge, and upon hearing the story of the Sodomite, the judge said to Eliezer: "You must pay without delay the money to this man, because he made you bleed." Eliezer grew very angry, picked up a stone and hit the judge so forcibly on the head that he made him bleed. "Now," said Eliezer to the judge, "whatever you owe me for cupping, pay to this man!"

2. *Torturing Strangers*

As the people of Sodom permitted no one to enter their houses to lodge, they set up beds in the middle of the street, some of which were very long and others short. When a stranger came, three men seized him by the head and three by the feet, and they placed him forcibly upon one of the beds. If he was a tall man, they made him

lie down in a short bed. And seeing his feet extend beyond the bed, the six men would try to jam him in with all their strength until the victim was on the point of death. If he was a short man they made him lie down in the long bed. Then the six men began pulling and wrenching his limbs with all their might until he filled out the bed. The outcries of the victims were answered with the words: "Thus will we deal with any man that comes into our land."

Once Eliezer came there and they asked him to lie down in one of those beds at night. But Eliezer refused and said: "Since my mother died, I have never slept in a bed at night." When the people of Sodom heard this, they withdrew their request and let him alone.

3. *A Sodomite's Hospitality*

One evening a stranger came to Sodom from a very distant country, called Elam. With him he had a donkey, a very beautiful cover and an extremely long rope. He sat down in the middle of the street, for no one would give him shelter for the night. A certain sly man, whose name was Hedor, passed by. He saw the stranger and said to him: "Enter my house and there you will find shelter and rest at your pleasure." The stranger thanked Hedor and went with him. Hedor took the cover and the rope into the house and the donkey he led into the stable.

In the morning the stranger said: "Now it is time for me to depart." Hedor said: "Don't you wish to have breakfast here and then go?" The stranger consented, and after having eaten his meal, he said to his host: "May the Lord bless you, because you have done this kindness to me, for you have taken me into your house and given me food and drink."

When the stranger was about to depart, Hedor said: "Oh, how can you travel now, when the sun is burning so hot that it is impossible to go outside? Stay with me until the sun has set." Hedor urged the stranger, and he stayed with him until evening. When evening came, Hedor said to the stranger: "Lo, it is extremely dark outside, and if you go now, you may go astray and come to harm. Be pleased to stay with us this night, too."

The next morning, the stranger arose early, intending to depart at once, and he went to feed his donkey. Hedor approached him and said: "Stay with us until after breakfast." But the stranger said that he could not stay any longer, and that he must depart immediately.

Hedor's wife then approached her husband and said: "This stranger has been in our house for two days, and he has partaken of our food; and now he is going away from us, and may never return again." Hedor said to his wife: "You just keep still and I shall devise a plan to make him pay for whatever he has eaten and drunk."

When they got through speaking, the stranger came into the house to get the cover and the rope, which he had given to the host on his arrival.

"Oh," said Hedor, "you must have been dreaming of a cover and a rope. I will give you the interpretation of your dream. The long rope signifies that you will have long life, as long as a rope. The beautiful cover of many colors indicates a beautiful garden. God wishes to show you in a dream that in days to come you will possess an extremely beautiful garden, in which you will plant all kinds of fruit trees, and that your days will be prolonged."

"Why do you speak to me thus?" said the stranger. "I had no dream, but when I was fully awake I gave you a beautiful cover and a long rope."

"Now that I have given you the interpretation of your dream, you will have to pay me three pieces of silver for it."

The stranger and Hedor then appeared before a magistrate, and Hedor complained: "This man had a dream about a rope and a cover, and I gave him the interpretation, but he refuses to pay me." The judge ruled that the stranger must pay Hedor for his services. The stranger, who questioned the justice of the judge, was ordered to be thrown out of the court-house. Hedor then cursed the stranger, insulted him, and the inhabitants drove the outsider out of the town.

4. *Two Girls Burnt Alive*

One day two girls came down to a well to draw water. One girl said to the other: "Tell me why do you look so bad to-day?"

"We have no bread in the house," the girl answered, "and we have not tasted any food for the past two days."

"Stay here, my friend, until I return," she said. The girl hastily ran home, filled her pitcher with flour, and on returning, said to her friend: "Here, let us exchange pitchers, you give me yours, and I will give you my pitcher full of flour."

When this kind act became known to the people of Sodom, the kind-hearted girl was tried, found guilty and burned alive.

Pletis, the daughter of Lot, once found a poor old man in the street, who was dying of hunger and thirst. She went home, filled her pitcher with all kinds of food, and secretly brought it to the old man. Every day after that she used to put some food into her pitcher, pass by the old man, and stealthily give it to him.

The Sodomites were surprised and said to one another: "What does this poor old man live on? So many days have passed in which neither food nor drink was given him and he is still alive. By this time he should have died from thirst and hunger."

Some time passed before they found out that it

was Pletis who was providing him with food. They brought her to court and tried her before the judges of the town. The judges ordered that she be taken out of the city and burned alive, for being generous to the poor man.

5. *The Cup of Their Iniquity Is Filled*

One day a wayfarer came into Sodom and sat down in one of the streets of the city. A certain girl saw him there in the middle of the night and said to him: "Where do you come from, and where are you going to?"

"I come from a very distant city," he said, "and when I came to Sodom, the sun had already set. I came here to stay over night. Early in the morning, I shall continue my journey. Come, dear maiden," he pleaded, "give me some water, because my tongue is parched from the heat. Have pity on me."

The girl, moved by the old man's plea, went home and fetched some bread and water. After the man had finished eating and drinking, he thanked the girl in the name of God. When the judges of the city became aware of this act, they placed her on trial. The judges sentenced her to death. The people smeared her body with honey from the crown of her head to the tip of her toe and placed her near bee-hives. The bees stung her to death. She uttered one shrill cry, which went up to heaven and reached Almighty God.

Thereupon God spoke to the angels, saying: "This cry moves Me to action. Descend and put an end to the evil deeds of the Sodomites."

God then informed Abraham that he was about to destroy Sodom and the other cities of the plain. Abraham, like a loving father, implored God to forgive the people this time, on the ground that perchance they might mend their ways in the future. God, however, would not listen to the prayer of Abraham, and said: "The girl's death has filled the cup of their iniquity and I must punish them for their sins. If, however, I find ten good people among them, I will spare all the cities for their sake." The angels that were at Abraham's house, seeing that God did not grant Abraham's prayer, immediately left his house and went to the city of Sodom, for they knew that there were not even ten good people in the sinful cities.

6. *Lot and His Wife*

The judges of Sodom appointed Lot to be their chief judge. While he was sitting in the gate of the city and acting as judge, he saw two angels in human form. At that moment he thought of his uncle Abraham, who had always received strangers with great joy and kindness. He rose to meet them, bowed to them and said: "Pray, my masters, come to my house, and there you will find rest." "No," said the angels, "we shall sleep in the street." But Lot insisted and the angels fol-

lowed him to his house. Lot feared the wrath of the people of Sodom. He gave the angels no water to wash their feet with. "For," he thought: "if the people of Sodom on the following morning see the dust on the feet of these men, they will think that they have just now arrived, and will not suspect me of having been hospitable."

When Edith, Lot's wife, saw him coming in with two strangers, she was greatly displeased. But Lot ordered her to prepare supper for his guests. Finding that she had no salt in the house, she went to a neighbor and said: "Pray lend me some salt, for my husband all of a sudden has become hospitable. Two strangers have just arrived at our house, and my husband was very glad to meet them. Now he insists that I prepare a rich feast for them, and I am short of salt."

The presence of the strangers soon became known to the people of Sodom and they crowded around the house of Lot. All the people came, both young and old, big and small, not one was missing. When the Sodomites tried to break the door open, they were smitten with blindness, and they failed to find the door.

"Now," said the angels to Lot early in the morning, "bring everything you have out of this city, for God is going to destroy all the cities of the plain."

Lot was terrified by their words, and he went at once to his sons-in-law and said to them: "Has-

ten, depart from this place, for God has sent angels to destroy the city." "Oh, you must be out of your senses," they laughed. "You fool! The whole city is merry and rejoicing; harps, flutes and cymbals resound, and you say Sodom will be destroyed!"

Lot then ran to get his money back from the people to whom he had lent it on usurious terms, but the angels hurried him and made him return quickly to his house. He began to gather all his precious stones, gold and silver. To avoid further delay, the angel Michael seized Lot, his wife and his daughters, and rushed them out of the city. "Do not look behind you, and do not stop while crossing the plain," commanded the angels. "Flee to the mountain, lest ye die." At the same time the rain that was pouring down upon the cities was changed to brimstone. Lot's wife did not heed the order of the angels, and looked back at Sodom, whereupon she was turned into a pillar of salt. This pillar is still standing by the brook Kedrion. Every day cattle gather around it and lick it up, and in the evening it seems that there is nothing left of it, but when morning comes it stands there as large as ever.

When the rumor spread in the sinful cities that death was near, they that worshiped the sun exclaimed: "Oh, would that morning came, so that the sun whom we worship might deliver us from this calamity." They that worshiped the moon

Lot's wife was turned into a pillar of salt

said: "Oh, would that morning never came, so that the moon might deliver us from this trouble." God heard the blasphemy of the people of Sodom and caused fire and brimstone to rain down from heaven at the very moment when both sun and moon were in the skies. The angel Gabriel, who was sent to destroy Sodom, put forth his little finger and touched the rock upon which were built the five cities of the plain, and overturned them, thus destroying everything that was found in them.

Chapter X

PIETY OF ABRAHAM

1. *Hospitality*

IN those days Abraham built on all highways inns for wayfarers. In the inns he placed all kinds of food and plenty of water. If any wayfarer was tired and weary from his journey, if he was hungry or thirsty, he entered one of the inns and there he found tables heaped with all kinds of food and drink, and beds upon which to lie down. Then the wayfarer would thank the God of Abraham and bless His name.

In Beersheba, Abraham built a very large house, and in it he placed four doors, one on each side. "For," said he, "let no wayfarer have to look for the door; let him be able to enter my house, whichever way he comes." Around the house he planted a beautiful orchard. At the entrance there was a wonderful tree the like of which there never was, and never will be. If a righteous man, who believed in God, approached Abraham's house, the tree spread its branches out, and with its leaves covered the man to shield him from the scorching heat of the sun. But if a man who worshiped idols

approached it, the tree folded up its branches and cast no shade, thus refusing shelter to the idol-worshiper. When Abraham saw a man approach him for whom the tree folded its branches, he would nevertheless hasten to receive him kindly, serve him with all kinds of food, and say to him: "Eat and drink as much as you desire." And Abraham would attend him in person and sit down with him and explain to him all about the great doings of God in heaven, and talk to him so much about the wonderful things of God, that the stranger at last acknowledged the true God in heaven. Whenever the people wanted to thank Abraham for his kindness, he would say to them: "Do not thank me, but thank God in heaven. He it is who does these great deeds. He is the only one in heaven and on earth." "Pray, teach us how to thank Him," they would say to him. Abraham would joyfully reply: "My good people, say: 'Blessed be the Lord, forever and ever.' "

Abraham became so widely known that people from all the corners of the world came to him. He received them with great joy and love. Sarah provided new clothes for all those who came with torn ones, and she busied herself with the visitors day and night. In the daytime she helped her husband serve them food. In the nighttime, when the visitors went to sleep, she stayed up and sewed dresses for poor women and their children. Thus her light was never extinguished, from Friday eve

to Friday eve. When God saw her great kindness and love for the poor, He surrounded her house with beautiful clouds, and this became the wonder of the whole world.

Sarah thus became very popular with the women, and they would come to her daily to greet her. But she would say to them: "Why pay me all these honors? Behold Hagar who is sitting there unnoticed is much more deserving than I am. Go to her and greet her."

When the women visited Hagar and greeted her, she would say to them: "Do you really believe that Sarah is beloved by God? Why then does He withhold happiness from her and does not grant her any children?"

Abraham's name had originally been Abram, but God added the additional letter *He,* thereby changing his name into Abraham. Sarah's name, too, had been changed from Sarai to Sarah by replacing the *Yod* with a *He.*

Grieved at being removed from the good woman's name, the *Yod* flew up to the throne of Divine Majesty and complained: "True, I am the smallest of all the letters in the alphabet, and therefore I deserve no consideration. But since Thou didst show Thy kindness unto me by placing me in the name of the pious woman, why hast Thou removed me from it?"

"Thou art justified in thy complaint," said God, "therefore will I show unto thee greater considera-

tion: instead of being the last letter in the name of a pious woman, thou shalt be the first letter of a great and pious hero (Joshua)."

2. *Tolerance*

One evening, as Abraham was sitting at the entrance of his tent, he saw an old man, tired and weary, approach. Abraham ran to meet him and said: "Pray, my lord, do not pass the door of your servant Abraham, but lodge here for the night. In the morning you may continue your way."

"No, here in the open I will lodge," answered the old man. But Abraham insisted and the old man entered his tent. After the old man had eaten his meal, Abraham said to him: "Now praise the bountiful God in heaven who gives food to all His creatures."

"I do not know who your God is," said the old man. "I will praise no other god except the one that my own fingers have made."

"Oh," said Abraham, "the gods which your own fingers have made are helpless, and they cannot even see themselves. The true God who has made heaven and earth, is in heaven, and to Him we have to give thanks for His daily kindness."

"What have I done to you that you want to keep me from worshiping my own god? Leave me alone, for I will not listen to you," said the stranger.

Abraham grew very angry at the stubbornness

of the old man, and said: "Get out of my house at once!" In the dead dark of night in the wilderness, the old man walked aimlessly and without protection against the wild animals.

"Where is the man that came to thee this night?" asked God of Abraham.

"Oh, that man was very obstinate and he refused to listen to me. I begged him to believe in Thee, and he did not heed my words. He said that he would believe in no god save the one that his own fingers had made. I therefore grew angry and drove him out of the house."

"Knowest thou what thou hast done?" asked God. "Art thou aware that I have suffered this old man for many years, even though he denies Me? I have been kind and merciful to him, I have provided him with food, and with all the other necessities of life. Yet when he came to thee for but one night's shelter and but one meal, and aroused thy anger, thou drovest him out of thy house."

"Oh, pray forgive my wrong-doing," implored Abraham.

"No, I will not forgive thee," said God, "except thou go and beg the old man to return to thy house; and if he will forgive thee, I shall forgive thee, but not otherwise."

Abraham immediately ran to the wilderness, looked for the old man, and when he found him, Abraham fell on his knees and spoke thus: "Pray

forgive me for what I did to you to-night, for I know that I was wrong."

The old man listened to Abraham's prayer and said: "Yes, I forgive you, Abraham."

But Abraham did not leave him alone. He insisted that the old man return to his house and stay over night. He gave him food and drink and he provided him with food for his journey.

"Because thou hast done this thing," said God to Abraham, "I will always remember my covenant with thee and thine offspring. When they do evil, I will chastise them, but my anger against them will not last forever; I will remember My covenant with thee and forgive them."

3. *The Feast and Satan*

A year passed and a son was born to Abraham by his good wife Sarah. The son was named Isaac. Many kings and princes gathered at the house of Abraham to celebrate the event, and among the guests was the giant Og, the king of Bashan.

When Isaac was weaned, Abraham again made a great feast. At this feast all the great men of the land came to express their good wishes to Abraham and his wife Sarah. When Satan saw the joy of Abraham, he appeared at the house of Abraham in the guise of a beggar. He stood at the door of Abraham's house, asking for alms or a meal. Abraham was so busy with the feast and

with waiting upon the guests, that he did not notice the poor man standing at the door, and as a result did not call him into the house to partake of the food.

"Oh, how happy I am that this thing has happened," said Satan. "Now it is time for me to fly to heaven." He then presented himself before God and said: "O God, now that Thou hast fulfilled all the wishes and desires of Abraham's heart, he has ceased to pity the poor. To-day I tried him. I stood like a poor man at the door of his house, and he did not even take notice of me, neither did he call me to eat bread. And what is more," said Satan, "of all the cattle he slaughtered for the feast he did not care to spare even one little lamb to bring an offering to Thee, Almighty God."

"There is none in the whole world as God-fearing and kind-hearted as Abraham," said God. "For whom does Abraham rejoice, if not for Isaac? Yet, if I should tell him to bring his only child as a sacrifice to Me he would do so."

4. *Ishmael*

Ishmael was the son of Abraham by Sarah's servant Hagar. Ishmael's actions were very bad, and Sarah, like a good mother, tried to teach him to be good. She said to him, "My son, pray, try to improve, so that you may be loved by both God and man." Seeing that Ishmael did not heed her

words, she said to herself: "Let me keep watch on my son Isaac, lest he learn the evil ways of Ishmael and be as bad as Ishmael is."

One day Sarah saw Ishmael bring an idol and play with it in the presence of Isaac. Sarah rebuked him and said: "Don't do a thing like that any more in our house because you will be punished." Ishmael, fearing Sarah, took the idol and hid it in a secret place outside of the house.

At another time Ishmael said to Isaac: "My brother, let us go to the field to play." When they came to the field, Ishmael took arrows and aimed them at Isaac.

"Why do you do that?" asked Isaac.

"Oh, don't you see that I am simply jesting with you, Isaac?" replied Ishmael.

But Ishmael really did this purposely, "because," thought he, "I will slay my brother Isaac and then I will inherit all the wealth of my father." When this thing became known to Sarah, she begged Ishmael to mend his ways, but Ishmael was always looking for a chance to kill his brother Isaac. Sarah became greatly alarmed by the acts of Ishmael, and she said to Abraham: "Pray drive Ishmael out of the house, because he intends to kill Isaac, our son."

"How can I do a thing like that?" said Abraham.

"Whatever thy wife Sarah tells thee, obey," the voice of God replied.

Abraham then gave Hagar bread and a bottle full of water, and put Ishmael on her shoulders. Hagar, together with her son Ishmael, walked toward the wilderness. During their lonesome journey she began to look around for her idols, to bow and pray to them. Suddenly the water in the bottle disappeared, and she had no water to give to Ishmael, who was very thirsty on account of a great fever that overcame him. Ishmael cried loud and bitterly, because he was dying of thirst. His mother cast him under willow shrubs and she sat down at a distance. "For," said she, "let me not see my child die of thirst." Ishmael then prayed to God, and God listened to his prayer, and was about to cause a spring of water to form at the place where the boy lay.

"O Merciful God!" exclaimed the angels, who surrounded Him. "Why wouldst Thou have mercy upon Ishmael, and save him from death? Surely, it is known to Thee that in future times his children will cause the children of Israel to perish from thirst, when they shall be exiled from their land."

"Tell me," said God, "what is Ishmael now, righteous or wicked?"

"Ishmael is as yet righteous," said they, "for he is still unable to distinguish between good and evil."

"Know ye, therefore, that I judge not men by their future deeds, but by their present deeds."

5. *The Two Wives of Ishmael*

The wife of Ishmael bore him four sons and a daughter, and afterward Ishmael, together with his mother, his wife and children went to the wilderness. There they built tents and they kept on encamping and journeying, month after month, and year after year. God gave Ishmael flocks and herds and tents, for the sake of his father Abraham.

One day Abraham said to Sarah: "It is now three years since my son Ishmael left our house and went to live in the wilderness. Pray let me go to see him and find out how he is getting along."

"Do as you desire," answered Sarah.

Abraham rode upon one of his camels to the wilderness to seek his son Ishmael. When Abraham reached the tent of Ishmael, he found Ishmael's wife sitting at the entrance of the tent with her children. "God be with you," said Abraham to her, but there was no reply. "Where is your husband Ishmael?" he inquired.

"He and his mother went to the wilderness to bring apples, pomegranates and figs."

"Pray, my daughter," said Abraham, "let me have a little water, because I am very thirsty from my long journey."

"I have neither bread nor water," answered Ishmael's wife.

"When your husband returns," said Abraham to

her, "tell him that an old man from the land of Canaan was here, and asked after his welfare, and that the old man said the pin of his tent was very bad, and that he should remove it and place another one in its stead." Then Abraham departed homeward. When Ishmael returned to his tent, his wife told him what had happened. He at once understood that the old man was his father Abraham, and that the pin meant his bad wife. He therefore divorced her and married another woman.

Three more years passed and Abraham once more rode upon his camel to the wilderness to seek his son Ishmael and to see how he was getting along. As soon as Abraham came near the tent of Ishmael, a woman, who was Ishmael's wife, came out to meet him, and said: "God be with you, old man."

"Where is your husband, my daughter?" inquired Abraham.

"He went to the forest," she replied, "to hunt some game."

"Pray let me have some water, for I am very thirsty," said Abraham.

The woman immediately ran into the tent and brought out some bread and water and gave it to the old man. When he had finished eating and drinking, he prayed to God and said: "O merciful God, send Thy blessing upon the house of my son." And he turned to Ishmael's wife and said:

"When your husband returns, tell him that a very old man from the land of Canaan was here and asked after his welfare. The old man also said that the new pin which had been put into his tent was a great honor to him, and that he should never remove it from its place." When Ishmael returned home, and his wife told him what had happened, he said: "This old man is my beloved father Abraham. May God bless him and prolong his life, for he still cherishes and loves his son."

Ishmael then took his wife and his children and journeyed thence, and came to his father in the land of the Philistines. In that land Abraham and Ishmael dwelt for a long time.

Chapter XI

ABRAHAM'S TEMPTATION

1. *God's Command*

ONE day the angels came to present themselves before God, and Satan was among them.

"Whence comest thou?" inquired God of Satan.

"From my wanderings up and down the earth," answered Satan.

"And what hast thou to say concerning my faithful servant Abraham?" asked God.

Satan now saw a chance of repeating his charge against Abraham, and said: "Abraham remembered Thee and served Thee only when he required something from Thee, but now he has forsaken Thee. When he had no children, he served Thee and erected altars to Thee wherever he came, and he proclaimed Thy name continually to all the children of the earth. But now that Thou hast given him whatever he had desired, hast made his name great and a blessing in the mouth of all the people that inhabit the earth, and hast even given him a son in his old age, he has forgotten Thee. On the day his son was born, and also on the day

he was weaned, he made a great feast for all the inhabitants in the land, and he did not offer to Thee as much as a turtle-dove or a pigeon."

"There is none so just, so righteous, and so true to Me as My servant Abraham," said God. "And were I even to ask him to sacrifice his only son Isaac to Me as a burnt-offering, he would not withhold him from Me."

"Speak now to Abraham as Thou hast said," said Satan, "and Thou wilt see whether he will heed Thy words."

God decided to try Abraham and Isaac, and He said to Abraham: "Take now thy son."

"I have two sons," said Abraham, "and I don't know which one to take."

"Take thy only son," said God.

"The one is the only son of his mother, and the other is the only son of *his* mother," said Abraham.

"Take then the son that thou lovest," said God.

"I love them both," said Abraham.

"Take thy son Isaac," said God, "and offer him to Me as a burnt offering, on one of the mountains which I will show thee."

"What shall I do?" thought Abraham to himself. "How shall I separate Isaac from his mother Sarah? If I tell her what God has told me, she will die of great anxiety and sorrow. If I take him away stealthily from her, so that she may not know whither he is gone, she may kill herself. The only thing left for me to do is to devise a plan

and take Isaac away from the house with her consent."

"Go to the market-place," Abraham said to Sarah, on the following morning, "and buy the best food and drink you can get, for we have a holiday to-day."

"What holiday is there to-day," inquired Sarah, "that you tell us to be merry and joyful?"

"Why should we not rejoice," said Abraham, "when God was very kind to us, and gave us a son in our old age?"

In the middle of the feast, Abraham said to his wife: "Sarah, do you know that Isaac has already reached the age of thirty-seven? When I was only three years old, I already acknowledged the existence of the God in heaven, and our son Isaac is grown up and has not yet learned to know God. I know of a certain place where lads are taught to know God. Let me take Isaac there so that he may learn to fear the Almighty God, and to be kind to all his fellow-men."

"Very well," said Sarah, "take him to the place of which you have spoken, but pray take good care of him on the way, for I have no other child but him. Oh, neglect him not, my husband. If he be hungry, give him bread, and if he be thirsty, give him water to drink; do not let him go on foot; speak kindly to him, shield him from the hot rays of the sun, and be kind to him and do not get angry at him." Sarah then chose a very fine gar-

ment and a beautiful turban for her son Isaac. On the top of the turban she fastened a precious stone. She also prepared provisions for the road. She wept bitterly and said: "Who knows if I shall ever see my son Isaac again?"

"I shall follow your wishes faithfully," Abraham reassured Sarah.

Early in the morning Sarah fell asleep and Abraham, seizing this chance, took with him two of his men, Ishmael and Eliezer, chopped wood for the burnt offering, and they all set out for the place of which God had spoken to him.

2. *Satan Interferes*

When Abraham and Isaac had traveled some distance, Sarah awoke from her sleep. Satan then appeared to her and said: "Where is thy husband?"

"My husband went on some journey," answered Sarah.

"And where is thy beloved son Isaac?" asked Satan.

"My son Isaac went with Abraham to a certain place to learn the law of God," replied Sarah.

"Why didst thou let him go there?" asked Satan. "Thou shalt never see him again."

"No harm can befall anyone unless God wills it," said Sarah.

Enraged by Sarah's answer, Satan went and appeared to Abraham in the figure of a very old

man, and said to him: "Where art thou going? Art thou mad? God gave thee a son in thine old age, and now thou art going to kill him. Hast thou lost thy senses?"

"I must do what God bids me, and I will do it gladly," answered Abraham.

Disappointed by this answer, Satan returned and appeared to Isaac in the figure of a young man.

"Tell me, lovely boy, whither art thou going?" asked Satan.

"I am going to learn the law of God," answered Isaac.

"Ha, ha, ha," laughed Satan, "when art thou going to learn the law of God, during thy lifetime or after thy death? Dost thou not know that thy foolish old father is leading thee to the slaughter?"

"Father," exclaimed Isaac, "what does this bad man want of me?"

"Do not listen to him," said Abraham.

Disappointed once more, Satan ran ahead of Abraham and transformed himself into a large river in the road. When Abraham and his son Isaac came to the river, and found neither bridge nor ford, they entered the river. But the farther they went, the deeper grew the river, until the water reached up to their necks. Abraham recognized the place and knew that there had been no water there before. He lifted his hands toward

heaven and said: "O Lord, it was Thy wish that Thy name be sanctified through me, and now if either my son or I be drowned in this river, how will Thy name be sanctified?"

"By My name do I swear," answered a holy voice from heaven, "that thou and thy son Isaac shall sanctify My name." God then rebuked Satan, and the river suddenly disappeared and the place became dry land again.

3. *The Sacrifice*

On the third day of his journey, Abraham raised his eyes and saw at a distance the place of which God had spoken to him. He noticed a large valley in front of him, surrounded by many hills. Suddenly the hills moved from their places, gathered in one place, and formed one big mountain. He also noticed a pillar of fire on the top of the mountain which reached to heaven, and the entire mountain was wrapped in a cloud, the like of which was never seen before.

"What can you see there, my son?" asked Abraham of Isaac.

"I see a pillar of fire and a cloud on the top of the mountain," answered Isaac.

"Do you see anything there?" asked Abraham of Ishmael and Eliezer.

"Where?" said they in surprise. "We see nothing there but hills and valleys."

"Then," said Abraham to his servants, "tarry

here with the donkey, while my son and I go to that place yonder, worship God, and then return to you."

While they walked along, Isaac said to his father: "I see the fire and the wood, but where is the lamb to be sacrificed as a burnt offering?"

"God has chosen you for a burnt offering, my son," answered the aged father.

"If God has chosen me," said Isaac, "I am ready to give up my life for Him; but I am very much grieved because of my mother."

Abraham and Isaac reached the place which they had seen from a distance, and Abraham began to build an altar on the top of the mountain, while Isaac handed him stones and mortar. Abraham took some wood and arranged it upon the altar. He then bound his son Isaac and placed him upon the wood.

"Pray, father," implored Isaac, "don't inform my mother about my death while she is standing on the roof, lest she throw herself down in her despair. Do not inform my mother about my death while she is passing a well, lest she throw herself into it. Burn me into fine ashes, gather them in a casket and place it in my mother's chamber. At all hours, whenever she enters the chamber, she will remember her son Isaac and weep for him.

"And, my father," continued Isaac, "what will

you and my mother do in your old age? Who will comfort you in time of grief?"

"We can survive you by a few days only," answered Abraham; "and He who was our Comfort before you were born, will comfort us still."

Abraham then rolled up his garments, leaned his knees upon Isaac with all his strength, took a knife and stretched out his hand to slaughter his son. And God sitting upon His throne, saw how the father was ready to slaughter his only son and how the son was willing to be slaughtered. Tears were rolling down from the eyes of Abraham upon Isaac, and from Isaac down upon the wood. At that moment the heavens were opened and the angels broke out in loud weeping. Their tears fell upon Abraham's knife, and three drops fell into Isaac's eyes.

"Stay thy hand," called a voice from heaven unto Abraham.

"Who art thou?" exclaimed Abraham.

"I am the angel Michael sent down by the Lord of Hosts," answered the voice.

"I shall not depart from this place, unless God himself will tell me to stay my hand, for it was He who ordered me to do this."

"Do not touch the boy," called a voice from heaven, "for now I know that thou fearest Me."

When Abraham turned around he saw a ram, with its horns entangled in a thicket. This ram

had been created in the twilight of the first Sabbath Eve, when God rested from His labors. It had fed in the Garden of Eden under the Tree of Life, and it had drunk at the fountain of the Garden, which waters the whole earth.

Abraham took his son Isaac off the altar and untied his hands. Thereupon God opened the heavens and Abraham heard these words: "By Myself I swear, because thou didst not withhold thy son from Me, I will bless thee and multiply thy children like the stars in heaven."

"Thou swearest," said Abraham, "and I also swear, I will not leave this altar until I have said what I have to say."

"Speak on, for I am listening," said God.

"When Thou didst command me to sacrifice my son Isaac," said Abraham, "I might have said, 'O Lord, yesterday Thou saidst that in Isaac my seed would be called,' and now Thou sayest, "Take thy son, thy only son, even Isaac, and offer him for a burnt offering'! But I said nothing. I was ready and willing to offer my son as a burnt-offering, although he is dearer to me than my own life. I pray to Thee, O Merciful God, that when my children in generations to come will arouse Thine anger by sinning against Thee, Thou mayest forgive them, and deliver them from their suffering."

"I know," said God, "that thy children in generations to come will sin against Me, and I will sit

"Stay thy hand," called a voice from heaven

in judgment upon them on New Year's day. If they desire that I grant them pardon, they shall blow the ram's horn on that day, and I, mindful of the ram that was substituted for Isaac as a sacrifice, will forgive them for their sins."

Abraham then took the ram, put it on the altar, and offered it as a burnt-offering instead of his son Isaac. The fire did not consume the entire ram, for the following parts were left: ten blood-vessels, the skin, and the two horns. The blood-vessels were used by King David as strings for the wonderful harp which he played. The skin was worn by Elijah the prophet as a girdle. The left horn was kept against the day when God should sound it on the mountain of Sinai when about to give the Children of Israel the Ten Commandments. The right horn remains hidden to this day. When God shall restore the people of Israel to their own country, Elijah the prophet will take this horn, and with it sound a very powerful blast which will be heard from one end of the world to the other. The Children of Israel, hearing this call, will return from all corners of the earth to the land of their birth.

Now the place on which Abraham erected the altar was the same spot upon which Adam had brought his first sacrifice, and Cain and Abel offered their gifts to God. On this spot Noah had built an altar to God after he had left the ark, and here, too, the Temple was destined to be built.

4. *The Death of Sarah*

When Satan saw that Abraham and Isaac were about to return home, he went to Sarah and appeared to her in the figure of an old man, very humble and meek, and said to her: "Alas, hast thou heard what has happened?"

"No, I have heard nothing," answered Sarah.

"Dost thou not know," said Satan, "that thy husband Abraham suddenly lost his mind, took his son Isaac, bound him, put him upon an altar on a mountain and killed him? The boy cried bitterly and begged his father to have mercy on him, but he did not listen to him, and slaughtered him."

Sarah wept bitterly when she heard this report. She then went about to look for her son, till she came to Hebron. "Did you perchance see my son somewhere?" she asked of all the passers-by. But no one could tell her what had happened to her son Isaac.

Satan was not satisfied with this plan, so he changed himself into the figure of a young man, resembling Isaac, and he rushed suddenly into Sarah's tent and cried out: "O mother, father tried to kill me, but I escaped." As soon as Sarah saw her lovely son Isaac, she died from great joy.

Abraham and his son returned home and noticed from afar that the doors of Sarah's tent, which had always been kept open, were now shut. They

advanced slowly toward the tent. They were greatly frightened when, on approaching, they found that the doors were locked, and that the light that used to burn there continually was now put out. They understood that something wrong had happened and they ran to their neighbors and asked them about Sarah.

"Oh," said the neighbors, "Sarah was told that her son had been killed, and she went to look for him in Hebron." They quickly went there, and when they arrived, they found Sarah dead. Abraham and Isaac wept bitterly over her.

Abraham then went to Ephron and asked him to sell him the cave of Machpelah, as a burial place for Sarah. Ephron sold it to him for four hundred shekels of silver. When Abraham and the mourners reached the cave of Machpelah, he lifted up the stone which covered it and hewed out a grave for Sarah. Then Adam and Eve got up from their couches, and said: "How can we lie in the place where Sarah is buried? As it is, we are ashamed that we sinned against God in the Garden of Eden. And now that this righteous and blessed woman has come here to be with us, we shall be even more ashamed in the presence of God."

"Return to your places," said Abraham, "for I will pray to God for you, and you shall be no more ashamed." Adam consented and went back to his

place, but Eve refused to do so, till Abraham with his own hand carried Eve back to her place.

After Abraham had buried his wife, he sent Isaac to the house of Shem to learn the wisdom of God.

Chapter XII

ELIEZER'S MISSION

1. *Abraham's Request*

WHEN Abraham grew old, he said to his servant, Eliezer, "I do not want my son Isaac to take one of the daughters of this country to wife, because they are all idol-worshipers. Go, therefore, to the country where I came from, and there choose a wife for my son. Here is a scroll which I have written and signed. There it is stated that all that I possess is given away to my son Isaac. Take this paper and show it to the father of the girl, whom God has appointed for Isaac."

Eliezer then took ten of the camels belonging to his master, and muzzled them so that they might not eat of provender belonging to strangers. He loaded the camels with jewels and other precious things, and mounted ten of his master's servants upon them. He also took the document which Abraham had drawn up and went to the city of Nahor.

"Go down at once," said God to two angels, "and let one of you guard Eliezer on his way,

and let the other make Rebekah appear before him at the fountain at the moment he arrives there."

As Eliezer walked on, pillars of fire lighted the way when it was dark. While he was thus walking and watching the wonderful sights, he was greatly surprised to find himself so soon by the well which was near Haran. It generally took sixteen days to cover the distance to Haran, but he covered it in one day. "Surely, it is God who has wrought all this," thought Eliezer, and when he approached the well, he prayed to God that He send forth a girl who was righteous, pure and kind, that she might become the wife of Isaac, who was also righteous and kind.

2. *Rebekah at the Well*

At that moment the angel came into the house of Rebekah and prompted her to go to the well. She took her pitcher and went to get some water. When she came to the well and drew some water in her pitcher, she saw a little boy crying nearby.

"What happened to you, little boy?" inquired Rebekah.

"While I was running, I hit my foot against a rock, and now it is bleeding," the boy answered. Rebekah immediately took her pitcher off her shoulder and washed the boy's wounded foot. She also took off her kerchief and dressed the wound with it. "Now," she said to him, "you may return

home, and do not worry, for you will soon be cured."

When she walked a little further, she met a blind woman. Rebekah took pity on her and said: "Pray tell me if you know your way home."

"If I don't find my way home, I will stay in the fields over night as I did the night before," the woman replied.

"Do tell me where you live," persisted Rebekah, "so that I can lead you home." The woman thanked her and Rebekah took her to her house.

When Rebekah returned to the well, she was very tired. She sat down upon the stump of a tree to rest. "You are certainly tired," she said to an old man, who happened to pass by. "Here, come and sit down upon this stump where I am sitting," said Rebekah. The old man thanked her for her kindness and sat down. She then went to the well again, and filled her pitcher.

Eliezer watched Rebekah's actions closely, and he thought, "Surely this kind maiden is worthy to become the wife of my master's son."

"Pray, let me have a little water from your pitcher," he said to Rebekah.

"Drink to your heart's content, my master," said she, while she hastily took the pitcher of water off her shoulder. After he had drunk, she said: "I will also give water to your camels, as they are surely thirsty after the long journey."

All this time Eliezer looked on in amazement.

When the camels had finished drinking, he took out a nose-ring set with a precious stone and two golden bracelets, and, handing them to Rebekah, he said: "Pray tell me, whose daughter are you? And is there room in your father's house for us to lodge to-night?"

"I am the daughter of Bethuel," she said. "We have plenty of straw and fodder, and plenty of room in our house for you to lodge." When Eliezer received this answer, he was greatly astonished, and he thanked the Lord God who had not abandoned him on the way.

3. *Eliezer Saved from Death*

Rebekah had a brother whose name was Laban. When Laban saw the beautiful presents that his sister had gotten, he said to himself: "That man is certainly very rich. I shall make haste to kill him, and take all the gold and silver away from him."

"This man is running toward me," said Eliezer on beholding Laban, "and he is not a friend. He looks to be an enemy, and he comes here with evil intentions, for his face is that of a murderer." Eliezer then mentioned the name of God, and his camels suddenly rose in the air and remained on high. He again mentioned the name of God, and he himself was raised in the air, high above his camels. Laban was surprised at this sight, and greatly feared Eliezer, and he said to himself: "I

am no match for this man." He then said to Eliezer: "Why do you stand outside? Come with me, for we have plenty of room in our house for your lodging.

When the people of the town saw the costly presents which Rebekah had gotten from Eliezer, they said to one another: "Indeed, that man is very wealthy. Let us go and kill him, and take away everything he has." Upon reaching the well, they found Laban talking to Eliezer. Eliezer saw them come, and knew that they were coming with evil intentions. He seized two of his camels, one under each of his arms, and carried them across the river. When the people saw the wonderful strength Eliezer possessed, they became frightened and ran back to the town.

Eliezer, guided by Laban, came to Bethuel's house, and there he untied his camels and fed them. "How can I get all the wealth of this man?" said Bethuel to himself. At last he hit upon a plan and joyously exclaimed: "I will put poison into the plate of soup that is given to Eliezer, and when he dies, I shall take away everything he has."

When the deadly plate was placed before Eliezer, and he was requested by Bethuel to eat, he said: "I promised my master not to eat or drink until I have fulfilled my mission." While he was thus telling his story, an angel came down from heaven and changed the plates. He placed the

deadly plate before Bethuel, and Bethuel's plate he placed before Eliezer. After Eliezer had told his host about his mission, Bethuel said: "Since God had willed it so we will consent to your wishes, and Rebekah shall become the wife of Isaac." Eliezer then took out gold and silver and beautiful dresses and gave them to Rebekah. But suddenly, when Bethuel tasted the soup, he uttered a terrible cry, for he had swallowed the poison. He died instantly.

A few days later, Eliezer and Rebekah set out for the land of Canaan. When they came to Beersheba, Rebekah noticed that a man, who looked to be very kind, was coming to meet them.

"Who is that man?" she asked Eliezer.

"That man," said Eliezer, "is my master."

Rebekah was brought to the house of Abraham and the doors of Sarah's tent were again open to the poor and the needy. The beautiful clouds once more came down from heaven and surrounded the tent, and the light which had shed cheerful rays over the entire house in the lifetime of Sarah, appeared again. Isaac then understood that God was with him, and that he gave him a wife who was righteous and kind.

As a reward for his faithfulness, Abraham freed his servant Eliezer and gave him many precious gifts.

Chapter XIII

JACOB AND ESAU

1. *Their Birth*

REBEKAH, the wife of Isaac, had born him no children. One day she said to Isaac: "I am told that your mother Sarah did not bear any children before she was an aged woman. Then Abraham prayed for her and God listened to his prayer and Sarah gave birth to a son. Pray follow your father's example, and pray to God that I may bear a child."

Isaac and Rebekah went to Mount Moriah, and when they reached the place where Isaac had been bound by his father to be sacrificed as an offering to God, he prayed to God thus: "Thou hast promised my father Abraham that Thou wilt make his children as numerous as the stars in heaven and as the sand upon the seashore, and that they will have their own land. Now, let Thy word be fulfilled, O Lord, and grant that my wife Rebekah give birth to a child."

God listened to Isaac's prayer and granted his wish.

One day Rebekah happened to pass a temple, where there were idol-worshipers, and she suddenly felt great pains in her body. She continued

her walk, and when she passed by a synagogue, she again felt great pains. She was much worried about it, and she went to the synagogue of Shem and Eber, which was built on Mount Moriah, to inquire of them what the cause of her pains might be. And this was their reply:

"Know, O virtuous woman, that you will bear two children; and from them two great nations will spring up. One of them will inherit the pleasures of this world, and he will be an idol-worshiper. The second will inherit the bliss of the future world, and he will be a believer in the true God in heaven."

Rebekah bore twins sons to Isaac. The first one she named Esau, and the second one Jacob. When the boys reached the age of thirteen years, they were taken away from school.

"Now, let me continue my studies," said Jacob to his brother. "I will go to the synagogue of Shem and Eber, and there study the wisdom and knowledge of God."

"What do I care about the knowledge and wisdom of God," said Esau. "I would rather go to the forests and fields with my bow and arrows, and hunt animals and birds, and thus spend my time in pleasure and sport."

2. *The Cunning of Esau*

Esau was a sly and cunning boy, while Jacob was simple and just, and people called him "the

flower." Isaac, misled by Esau's false words, loved him greatly. But Rebekah and their aged grandfather, Abraham, were very fond of Jacob.

One day Esau was told that two men had been put in prison, one for stealing and the other for murdering, but that they refused to admit their crimes.

"Have they already confessed?" inquired Esau of the judge, when he reached the courthouse.

"No, they have not confessed," answered the judge. "They will not admit their crimes."

"Bring the thief to me," said Esau, "and I will show you that he will confess his crime." Thereupon the judge ordered the thief to be brought before Esau.

"Confess that you have stolen," said Esau to the thief.

"I did not steal," said the thief angrily.

"Oh," said Esau, "I know that you are an honest man, and the word 'thief' is not a suitable name for you. But, pray tell me, what is the name of the man that shared with you in the theft?"

"That rascal fled, and he took my portion as well," said the thief angrily. "I wish I could catch him and make him pay the penalty."

"Take him to prison at once," ordered the judge.

Then the judge ordered the murderer to be brought before Esau. "Why did the slain person strike you on the cheek a few times?" inquired Esau.

"You are a liar," said the murderer. "Do you think that I would let a coward like him strike me? Ask all the people of this town and they will tell you what a powerful and courageous man I am."

"Now let this man also go to prison and be punished for his crime," said the judge, "because they have both admitted their guilt."

Esau knew that his father Isaac was a holy man, and he therefore tried his best to find favor in his eyes. He would bring him the best of wines and the best of meats, in order to obtain his blessings. One day, Esau, seeing that his father did not wish to bless him, said: "Now I am going to deceive my father and make him think that I am good." He came to his father and sat down in front of him.

"Where do you come from, my son?" asked Isaac.

"I went to hear the word of God in the house of Shem and Eber," answered Esau.

"You have done well, my dear boy," answered Isaac with great joy.

"Now," said Esau, "I will give one-tenth of everything I have to the poor people. But, dear father, I want to ask you one question: Is it also necessary to give one-tenth of salt and straw to the poor people?"

"You are certainly a good boy," said Isaac, "and your thoughts are nothing but good and righteous."

When God saw that Isaac intended to bless his son Esau, He said: "Let the eyes of Isaac grow dim, so that he may not be able to see. Then Jacob, who is simple and just, will come and receive the blessing instead of Esau."

Chapter XIV

THE DEATH OF ABRAHAM

1. *Michael's Mission*

WHEN the day of the death of Abraham drew near, the sixty-three thousand eight hundred and seventy-five days that he had lived flew up to heaven and presented themselves before God. "O Mighty Lord of the Universe," they said, "we have all come here this day to testify for Thy faithful servant Abraham, that during all the days of his life he has done nothing but that which is just and right; that he has made Thy name great through his kind acts, and that he has spread peace and truth among the inhabitants of the earth."

God then said to the angel Michael: "Go and tell My servant Abraham that his time to depart from life has arrived."

Michael, in the form of a human being, came to Abraham and found him by his oxen. Abraham, thinking that he was a wayfarer, said: "Pray sit down for a little while; I will order a beast to be brought, and we shall go together to my house. There you will rest over night, for it now

is toward evening, and in the morning you will arise and go whithersoever you please."

Abraham called one of his servants and said to him: "Go, bring me a beast, that the stranger may ride upon it, for he is weary from his journey."

"I abstain from sitting upon any four-footed beast," said Michael; "let us walk therefore till we reach the house."

On their way thither they passed a very large tree, and Abraham heard a voice singing from among its branches: "Holy are you, because you have fulfilled the purpose for which you were sent." Abraham hid the secret in his heart, thinking that the stranger did not hear it. Arrived at his house, he ordered his servants to prepare a meal, and while they were busy with their work, he called to his son Isaac and said to him: "Arise and put water in the vessel that the stranger may wash his feet." When Isaac brought the vessel, Abraham said: "In this basin I shall never again put water for wayfarers to wash their feet." Hearing this, Isaac began to weep, and Abraham seeing his son weep, wept also, and Michael, seeing both of them weep, wept too, and the tears of Michael fell into the water, and became precious stones.

Before sitting down to the table, Michael went outside, and in the twinkling of an eye ascended to heaven. He stood before the Lord and said: "Lord and Master, I am unable to remind that

righteous man of his death, for I have not seen upon the earth a man like him."

"Go down to My friend Abraham," said God, "and I will cast the thought of his death into the heart of his son Isaac in a dream. Isaac will relate the dream to his father and thou shalt interpret it."

2. *God Himself Takes Abraham's Soul*

God thereupon opened the mouth of the angel that he might eat and drink, and when Michael went into the house of Abraham, they all ate and drank and were merry. When the supper was ended, they all prayed to God and after that they lay down to sleep. About the seventh hour of the night, Isaac awoke and came to the door of his father's chamber, crying: "Open, father, that I may touch you before they take you away from me." And Abraham wept together with his son, and when Michael saw them weep, he wept likewise.

Abraham made Isaac relate his dream, which Michael interpreted, saying: "Thy son Isaac has spoken the truth, for thou shalt be taken to heaven, but thy body shall remain on earth, until seven thousand ages are fulfilled, for then all flesh shall arise from the grave."

"Now I know that thou art an angel of the Lord," said Abraham, "and thou wast sent to take my soul, but I will not go with thee."

Michael returned to heaven and said: "Lord

God, Abraham refuses to obey me, and does not want to give up his soul."

"Go down again," commanded God, "and tell Abraham not to rebel against Me. Remind him also that no one who has come from Adam and Eve can escape death."

When Abraham heard the message of God, he said to Michael: "I am ready to give up my soul to God, but I desire one wish of mine to be fulfilled while I am still alive: I wish to be taken up to heaven, that I may see the creatures that the Lord had created in heaven and on earth."

Michael took Abraham upon a heavenly chariot, lifted him up in the air, and led him upon the clouds, accompanied by sixty angels. Abraham soared upon the chariot over the whole world and saw all things that are on the earth below, and he was also brought to the place where all souls are judged. There he saw two gates, one broad and the other narrow; the narrow one leading to Paradise and bliss everlasting through which all the just and pious enter, and the broad one leading to Hell and eternal punishment, through which all sinners enter.

Then said God to Abraham in a vision: "Open thy eyes, that thou mayest see the reward thou wilt receive." Abraham was then raised on the wings of the wind into the air of the heavens, and the higher he was raised the stronger was the light and the greater was his pleasure. Suddenly he

arrived at a place where the light was so strong that it enabled one to see from one end of the world to the other. Two gates made of carbuncle opened before him, through which thousands upon thousands of angels appeared, whose brightness resembled that of the skies. The angels stripped Abraham of his clothes, they took bright clouds out of which they made eight bright and resplendent garments, and in them they clothed Abraham.

One thousand and five odors then went forth from the Garden of Eden and perfumed the garments Abraham put on.

The angels thereafter took two crowns made of precious stones and placed them upon the head of Abraham. They led Abraham under the wonderful canopy that had been prepared for him, and there he beheld a table made of precious stones, which was surrounded by angels ready to do his bidding.

Suddenly Abraham was changed into a gay and frolicsome child. He looked around him and saw a great number of jolly children, with whom he went to listen to the sweet melodies of the angels, and then they sat down to rest under the Tree of Life.

Then childhood passed, the gay and frolicsome children vanished, and youth appeared on the scene. Abraham, now a youth, made merry with the many young men he beheld in the garden, and then they strolled together in the groves of Eden,

where they saw the most beautiful sights and things.

Youth passed and old age took its place. Abraham, now an old man, was met by many venerable men who discussed with him all things concerning mercy, charity, and righteousness. He enjoyed their conversation immensely. The elders then placed Abraham under two canopies, one made of the light of the sun and one, of the moon, from where a partition of lightning became visible. Abraham passed the partition, and there three hundred and ten worlds revealed themselves before him. These worlds were very beautiful, and neither their length nor their width had any end. At that moment the bright clouds stirred up the garden and myriads of fragrant odors filled the air.

"Thou wast shown only a small part of the garden kept in readiness for thee," said God. "For no mortal eye can behold it all."

"Pray, take my soul," said Abraham; "I am ready to die."

God then removed the soul of Abraham, and the angels took it up to heaven.

When the death of Abraham became known, men, women and children, even kings and princes from all over the world, gathered to mourn him. And thus did the people lament over Abraham: "Woe to the world that has lost its leader! Woe to the ship that has lost her captain." When they

reached the cave of Machpelah, they found the spot which Abraham had chosen for his burial place, and they buried him there. The people mourned over him for a whole year, and his name and memory became a blessing to this very day.

A mysterious jewel had been suspended from Abraham's neck; if a sick person looked at it, he would immediately be healed. When Abraham departed from this world, the Holy One, blessed be He, took the precious stone and set it in the sun.

Chapter XV

JACOB THE SIMPLE

1. *Esau Sells His Birthright*

ON the day of Abraham's death, Esau committed five crimes. One of the crimes was murder. The men whom he had slain were Nimrod and two of his servants.

It came about in this wise: Esau went hunting in the forest that day and from afar he espied Nimrod and his men, who likewise had come out to hunt. The garments worn by Nimrod were the same that had been worn by Adam and Eve when they left the Garden of Eden. All animals, on seeing these garments, approached Nimrod and bowed to him. Esau, seeing this, grew very envious and sought to kill him. It happened that Nimrod was separated from his people, and only two of his men remained with him. When Esau noticed this, he lay in ambush and waited until Nimrod passed him. Then he threw himself upon Nimrod and killed him. When Nimrod's companions came to his aid, he killed them likewise. The attendants of Nimrod heard the cries of their friends and ran toward the spot where the murder

had been committed. But before they reached the place, Esau managed to strip Nimrod of his garments and fled for his life.

Esau ran without pausing toward the city, for he greatly feared lest he be overtaken. Tired and exhausted, he appeared at the tent of Jacob, and found him busy preparing a dish of lentils.

"Why are you preparing lentils?" asked Esau of Jacob.

"Because our grandfather Abraham has passed away," he said, "and these lentils are meat for a mourner's meal. These lentils shall be a sign of my grief."

"If the pious as well as the wicked die," said Esau, "what good is it to be righteous and pious? Now we can clearly see that there is no future world, and that there is no special reward for the righteous. Why should I then exert myself to do what is good? Now, come Jacob, let me have some of the lentils, for I am tired and hungry."

"Why should this wicked Esau enjoy the birthright," thought Jacob to himself, "and offer sacrifices to God as a priest? Tell me, brother," said Jacob to Esau, "if you do not believe that there is a future world, and that God will punish the wicked and reward the righteous, will you sell me your birthright for the lentils which I am to give you?"

"Oh, I am going to die anyway," said Esau,

"and what good will the birthright do me? You can have it, if you will let me have some of your wine, lentils, and bread."

When Esau had finished his meal, he mocked Jacob: "Lo, brother you have bought something worthless." He then invited his friends to make game of Jacob. "Now see, my friends," said Esau to them, "what I did to Jacob. I ate of his lentils, drank of his wine, and all I gave in return was my birthright to him." Jacob did not reply to his brother's jeers, but he said: "Swear to me by the life of our father, that you sell me the birthright." Esau did so; and he even signed a document in which he gave up all his rights to the cave of Machpelah.

2. *Isaac Among the Philistines*

Shortly afterwards there was a famine in the land and Isaac wished to go to Egypt. But God appeared to him and said: "Remain in the land and cultivate it." Isaac obeyed the command of God and settled in Gerar.

While Isaac stayed in Gerar he walked in the ways of his father Abraham. He opened his hand wide to the poor and needy, and he never refused help to anybody. God therefore blessed the works of his hand and in spite of the famine, Isaac's fields brought forth plenty. He kept nine-tenths of the products of the soil, and the remainder he gave to the poor.

When the people of the land saw that Isaac was prosperous and that God was with him, his fame spread all over the country, and they spoke of him more than they did of their own king. When Abimelech came to Gerar and learned that, he grew very jealous of Isaac and he said to him: "When you came to this country, you only had a small flock, and now you have grown very rich. My servants and my people speak of none but you, and they admire none but you. Therefore depart from our midst."

Isaac then left the city of Gerar and settled in the valley of Gerar. While Isaac was away from the city of Gerar, many evils and troubles befell the inhabitants as well as the king. His councillors then said to him: "O king, do you not know that Isaac was a protection to the city, and that God had blessed the city for his sake? Therefore go now and recall him. Make a treaty with him so that you may henceforth be friends."

Abimelech listened to the advice of his councillors, and he took with him his chief general and went to make a treaty with Isaac.

"Wherefore have you come to me?" said Isaac on seeing Abimelech. "Surely, you hate me, for you drove me out of your land."

And Abimelech answered: "Now I see that God is with you, and therefore I desire to make an everlasting treaty between you and myself." Isaac then made a treaty with the king of Gerar

and his chief general, and after he had feasted them, they departed.

After that God appeared to Isaac and said: "Go out from this land and return to thine own land, the land of Canaan." Isaac thereupon went to the land of Canaan and settled in Hebron. While in Hebron, Jacob went to the school of Shem and Eber to learn the wisdom of God. And Esau insisted on staying home, under the pretext that he must provide his old father with venison. In truth, he simply intended to pass his time in hunting and other sports.

3. *Jacob Receives the Blessing of Esau*

One Passover eve Isaac called to his son Esau and said: "I am old and I am about to die, and I desire to bestow my blessings upon you. Now, my son, take your bow and arrow, go to the forest and hunt for some game. Prepare it and bring it to me so that I can bless you before I die; and this is the opportune time for prayer, for on this day God accepts the prayers of the angels to give dew and rain as a blessing upon the earth."

Rebekah, on hearing this, was greatly grieved. She said to herself: "Shall my good son Jacob be overlooked and not receive the blessings from his father, while my wicked son Esau receives all the blessings from him?" And she wept bitterly. Thereupon a voice came down from heaven, and exclaimed: "The eyes of Isaac shall become dim

and he will be unable to distinguish between Esau and Jacob, so that Jacob may receive the blessings from him instead of Esau."

Esau went to the forest. He caught a stag, bound it and tied it to a tree. "Now," said Esau to himself, "I shall go and get another one." But while Esau was away trying to get another stag, Satan came along, loosened the ties of the stag and it ran away. When Esau came back with another stag, he was surprised to find that the first one had escaped. He tied the second one to the stump of a tree and said: "Surely, this stag will not escape from me." But Satan came and loosened this stag as well. Disappointed, Esau decided to catch some birds. But the birds were frightened away by Satan and they all fled from him. All this was done so that Jacob might in the meantime prepare savory meat for his father and receive Isaac's blessings.

"Now, my son," said Rebekah to Jacob, "go to the flock and fetch me two young kids. I will prepare them and you will bring them to your father and be blessed instead of Esau."

"How can I do a thing like that?" said Jacob in astonishment. "How can I deceive my father?"

"Now," Rebekah said, "you must do what I say. Go and fetch me the kids."

"But," persisted Jacob, "if my father discovers that I deceived him, he will curse me instead of blessing me."

"That curse," answered Rebekah, "will fall upon me, and if you deceive your father, that sin will likewise rest on me. But do as I tell you, and lose no time."

"But should my father feel my hands and neck," argued Jacob, "he will surely know that I am Jacob, and not Esau. For my brother's hands and neck are covered with hair, while my hands and neck are smooth."

"I will find a remedy for that," said Rebekah. "But lose no time and run."

Jacob brought the kids to his mother, who prepared savory meat from them, according to the liking of Isaac. And with the skin of the kids she covered Jacob's hands and neck.

As soon as Jacob opened the door of Isaac's tent, it was filled with fragrant odors from the Garden of Eden, and Isaac was greatly pleased.

"Pray, father," said Jacob softly and gently, "rise and eat from the savory meat, which I have prepared for you so that you may bless me before you die."

At that moment a heavenly voice came down and said: "Because Jacob spoke so softly and gently to his father, therefore will I help his children in time of distress, and disperse all their enemies."

"How is it that you have found it so quickly?" asked Isaac in wonderment.

"Oh, God was merciful to me," answered Jacob.

As soon as Isaac heard the name of the Lord mentioned, he said to himself: "Surely, this is not my son Esau, for he never pronounces the name of God. Who are you?" he asked. "Are you really my son Esau?"

"Yes, father," answered Jacob, "I am your first-born son Esau."

"Come near me, so that I can feel you and see whether you are really my son Esau."

Jacob grew faint-hearted, and was afraid to approach his father, but two angels came down from heaven and, taking Jacob by the arms, led him to his father, who felt him and said: "Surely, the voice is that of my son Jacob, but the hands are those of my son Esau. Bring me the meat and wine," continued Isaac, "so that I may bless you before I die."

When Isaac had finished eating and drinking, he put his hands on Jacob's head and blessed him.

In the meantime Esau succeeded in catching one little bird which he prepared hastily and ran to his father.

Jacob had hardly left Isaac, when his brother Esau opened the door of the tent and exclaimed harshly: "Let my father arise and eat of his son's game." With Esau entered all the horrors of hell, and the walls of the tent began to shake.

And Isaac saw a big fire burning, and Esau standing nearby and putting more wood on, in order to increase the flames. "O, merciful God,"

Isaac exclaimed, "who will be burnt in this fiery furnace; I, or my son Jacob?"

"Neither thou nor thy son Jacob," answered God, "but thy son Esau."

Isaac trembled violently and exclaimed: "Who are you?"

"I am your first-born son," answered Esau.

"Who then, is he, that brought some savory meat to me and I blessed him?" asked Isaac; and he wanted to take away the blessing from Jacob and say: "Let him be cursed."

"What art thou about to do?" said God to him. "Thou art bringing a curse upon thyself. For hast thou not said to Jacob: 'Cursed be he that curseth thee, and blessed be he that blesseth Thee?' "

Upon hearing this Isaac exclaimed: "Let him be blessed."

"Have you not reserved a blessing for me?" cried Esau, and he began to weep bitterly. When Isaac heard him cry, he took pity on him and was about to bless him too, but God said unto him: "Dost thou wish to bless thy wicked son Esau? His descendants will, in time to come, destroy My Holy Temple, and scatter My people among all the nations."

Esau continued to wail. "This evil man cries for his very life," said God, "and shall I let him depart empty-handed?" He then bade Isaac bless his eldest son, too.

Chapter XVI

JACOB'S DEPARTURE

1. *Jacob Pursued by Eliphaz*

ESAU hated his brother Jacob, and looked for a chance to kill him. Rebekah, the ever-watching mother, knew it and one day she called Jacob and said to him: "My son, I know that your brother Esau intends to kill you. Thus I shall be deprived of the two of you in one day. Now, my son, listen to me, and flee to my brother Laban in Haran. With him you will stay until your brother's anger shall abate."

Thereupon, Rebekah went to the aged Isaac, and said to him: "I hate the daughters of Canaan, for they are all idol-worshipers. Should our loving son Jacob marry one of the daughters of this land, what good is life to me? I pray that you may grant him permission to go to my brother Laban, and marry one of the daughters of the land."

Isaac called Jacob, blessed him, gave him many gifts of silver and gold, and charged him to go to his uncle Laban. Jacob kissed his father and mother, and set out for Haran.

A few days passed, and when Esau learned of

the flight of his brother, he said to his oldest son Eliphaz: "My son, you are swift of foot, take your sword and some of your men with you, and run after Jacob. Kill him, and take away all the silver and gold he has with him." Now Eliphaz was a noted hunter and a valiant man of the mountains; he lost no time, took ten of his men, and ran after Jacob. "Is your coming in peace?" asked Jacob of Eliphaz when he was overtaken.

Eliphaz and his men drew their swords and advanced toward Jacob. When he came near he said: "My father ordered me to kill you and take away all that you have with you. Now get ready to die."

"You can take all the money, gold and silver I have, but spare my life," begged Jacob of him, "for what have I done to you? Know you that the descendants of Abraham will have to serve four hundred years in a land that is not theirs. If you slay me, then you, the seed of Esau, will have to pay the debt."

"Your words have softened my heart," said Eliphaz: "Give me all the silver and gold you have, and I will spare your life."

Jacob then gave him all he had, and Eliphaz and his men departed from him.

2. *The Dream*

It was still high noon when Jacob reached the mount of Moriah, and he therefore intended to

pass by without halting. But suddenly the sun set, and it grew dark. "What can this signify?" thought Jacob to himself. "Well then, I must stay over night in this place." And Jacob took twelve stones from the altar on which his father Isaac had lain bound as a sacrifice, and he put them around him as a fence. "For," said he, "these stones around me will protect me so that no animal of the wilderness can approach at night and devour me." The rest of the stones he put under his head in place of a pillow.

Then the stones began to quarrel among themselves. "Upon me shall this righteous man rest his head," contended each stone.

When God saw this, He said: "Let all these stones become one, so that they will have no reason to quarrel." At once all the stones joined themselves together and became one. Jacob put this stone under his head in place of a pillow, and fell soundly asleep.

In his sleep Jacob dreamt that he saw a ladder standing upon the ground, the top of which reached heaven. He saw four angels ascending the ladder. These were the angels of Babylon, Media, Greece, and Edom. The angel of Babylon mounted seventy rungs of the ladder, the angel of Media mounted fifty, the angel of Greece mounted one hundred, and after that they started to descend. But the angel of Edom continued his

Jacob took twelve stones and put them around him as a fence

ascent until he entirely disappeared from Jacob's view.

"Come, let us blot out the memory of Jacob from the face of the earth," called out the descending three angels to the angel of Edom.

Suddenly the heavens opened, and on the top of the ladder was God Himself, who thus spoke to Jacob: "Fear not, Jacob, for I shall be with thee and guard thee withersoever thou goest, and will bring thee again to this land."

"Who were the angels that ascended the ladder?" asked Jacob anxiously.

"These were the rulers of the kingdoms who in time to come will subdue thy children and rule over them," replied God.

"But, O Lord God, the first three angels I saw ascend and then descend, and the angel of Edom I saw only ascend but not descend," continued Jacob. "Shall my children be enslaved to him forever?"

"Though he rise as high as an eagle, and though his nest be set among the stars, I will bring him down thence," God assured Jacob.

At that moment God folded together the whole land of Palestine, put it under Jacob, and said to him: "The land, upon which thou art lying, to thee will I give it and to thy children. And thy children shall be as numerous as the dust of the earth."

"Why like the dust of the earth and not like the stars in heaven?" asked Jacob.

"When thy children will obey My commandments, they will survive all the nations of the earth, even as the earth survives all things. But if they will sin against Me they will be trodden upon by all the nations of the earth, even as the earth is trodden upon by all," explained God.

God then lifted the veil from the face of the future and showed Jacob his children receiving the Ten Commandments on Mt. Sinai, his children settled in the promised land, the Temple in all its glory, the destruction of the Temple and the exile, and finally the return of the exiled children from the four corners of the earth to their old land.

Jacob awoke from his sleep in great astonishment and said: "How fearful is this place! This is none other than the house of God and this is the gate of heaven." He then made a vow and said: "If God will be with me and guard me on my way, and will provide me with bread to eat and clothing to put on, I will give one-tenth of whatever I have to the poor and needy; and the Lord God in heaven shall be my God."

3. *Jacob at the Well*

Early in the morning, with renewed hope and courage, Jacob continued the journey to his uncle Laban. When the day was far advanced, Jacob

drew near Haran, and the first thing that drew his attention was a well in the field. Three shepherds with their flocks were lying round about the well, and on the top of it was such a heavy stone that it took forty men to remove it from its place.

"My friends, whence are you?" asked Jacob of the shepherds.

"We are from Haran," was the reply.

"Do you know Laban, the son of Nahor?" inquired Jacob.

"We know him," they answered.

"Is it well with him?" asked Jacob again.

"It is well with him," they said. "But recently there broke out a pest among his flock, and few of his large herd are left. Laban therefore no longer needs shepherds to tend his flock, and the few that he has left are in charge of his daughter Rachel. We expect her here soon, and when she comes you can inquire of her whatever you desire to know."

"Why do you tarry around the well?" inquired Jacob. "The sun is still high, and there is plenty of time left in which to pasture the flock. Why do you not water them now, and let them feed again?"

"Do you not see the huge stone at the mouth of the well?" said they. "We are waiting here for all the shepherds to come and help us, for it takes forty men to remove it. Then we shall water our flocks and let them go to feed."

While he was thus speaking to them, Rachel arrived with her father's flock. When he learned that she was the daughter of Laban, he immediately approached the well and without the aid of the shepherds removed the stone and watered the flock of his uncle. He then looked at Rachel and wept, because he foresaw that she was destined to die on the road and that she would not lie beside him in the cave of Machpelah.

When Rachel was told by Jacob that he was her cousin, she quickly ran home and informed her father of his arrival.

When Laban heard of Jacob's coming, he reasoned: "If Eliezer, the bondsman, came with ten camels all laden with precious things, surely Jacob, the favorite son of Isaac and Rebekah, would not be allowed to come here empty-handed. He must be laden with wealth and great riches." He therefore ran quickly to meet Jacob. Seeing that Jacob had neither slaves nor camels with him, he thought to himself: "No doubt he is laden with precious stones and money and he is keeping them in his girdle. Let me embrace him, throw my arms around him and feel his garments." Having felt his garments, and not being able to discover any riches or wealth on Jacob's person, he was greatly disappointed and grieved. None the less Laban invited his nephew Jacob to his home.

Chapter XVII

IN THE HOUSE OF LABAN

1. *Jacob Serves for Rachel*

WHILE Jacob was in the house of Laban, he did not stay idle. "I do not want my uncle to support me for nothing," said Jacob to himself. "I must earn my living." He therefore did all kinds of work in the house and the field. A few weeks passed thus, and when Laban saw how faithful Jacob was in his work, he said to him one day: "Because you are my kinsman should you serve me for naught? Tell me what shall be your reward."

Now Laban had two daughters, the elder of which was named Leah and the younger Rachel. Rachel was very beautiful, while Leah's eyes were weak. And this was the cause of Leah's weak eyes. She was told by all her neighbors and friends that her aunt Rebekah had given birth to two sons, the elder of which was named Esau, and the younger Jacob. The older son was very wicked, while the younger was good and righteous. She was told moreover that she, being the older daughter of Laban, would have to marry Esau,

while her sister Rachel would be married to Jacob. For many days, even years, Leah prayed to God and continually wept that He might not cause her to become the wife of the wicked Esau. Thus she wept over her supposed fate until the lashes dropped from her eyelids.

"I will serve you seven years for your daughter Rachel," said Jacob to Laban.

"Agreed," said Laban. "It is more pleasant for me to give my daughter to you as wife than to anybody else."

On the day Jacob was to begin his work, he approached Laban and said to him: "I have noticed that the people of this place are dishonest; tell me again what you will give me for my seven years work."

"I have already promised to give you Rachel for a wife," replied Laban.

"But there may be other maidens in this town whose name is Rachel," protested Jacob.

"I will give you *my daughter Rachel,"* answered Laban.

"But you are apt to change your daughters' names, and call the present Rachel Leah, and Leah Rachel," said Jacob.

"Then I promise to give you *Rachel my younger daughter,"* assured him Laban.

Jacob worked with Laban for seven years, during which time he performed his services faithfully. God was with him in everything he did,

and as a result the wealth of Laban increased immensely.

2. *Jacob Deceived by Laban*

At the end of seven years, when the time had come for Laban to give his daughter Rachel to Jacob as wife, he gathered together all the people of the neighborhood, and said to them: "Do you know that God has blessed you all on account of Jacob, the son of my sister?"

"Indeed, we are aware of it," they said. "From the day Jacob came into our midst all has gone well with us, and God has blessed us in everything. For God has sent us His blessings, and there is always enough water in the well for our cattle and ourselves, while before he came we had suffered from lack of water."

"Now, my friends," said Laban, "the seven years of Jacob's term have ended this day, and I must give him my daughter Rachel as wife. He will then no longer stay with us, but he will take his wife and return with her to his own country."

On hearing this all his neighbors were greatly troubled and they said to him: "What then is your advice? We are ready to do whatever you tell us."

"If you desire that Jacob remain with us," said Laban, "I am going to deceive him. On the night of the wedding I will give him Leah instead of

Rachel as his wife, and then he will have to stay with me and serve me seven more years for Rachel, whom he loves dearly."

"Your advice is excellent," they all exclaimed with great joy.

"Now," said Laban, "if it is really your desire that Jacob remain with us, you must keep whatever I said to you as a secret. But I do not believe in your promises. What I want is that each and every one of you give me a pledge of some gold or silver, that you will not betray me."

They all went home, brought gold and silver with them and gave them to Laban as a pledge. Laban took all the articles they brought and sold them, and with the money he bought wine, oil and meat with which he prepared a great feast for them. They feasted all day and until midnight. They drank so much wine that they became drunk, and during the singing and dancing they kept on shouting: "Halia! Halia!" [*Ha Leah*=this is Leah]. Seeing that Jacob paid no attention to their shouting, they continued until their throats became dry. But Jacob, simple as he was, still took no heed of what they shouted.

At the wedding ceremony Laban took his daughter Leah, covered her face with a bride's veil, and brought her instead of Rachel to the bridegroom. When the wedding ceremony was over, and the veil was removed from the bride's face, Jacob said to Laban: "Why have you

deceived me? I have served you seven years for Rachel and not for Leah."

"It is not customary in our place," answered Laban, "to give the younger in marriage before the older. Serve me another seven years and I will give you my daughter Rachel, too, as wife."

Jacob agreed to remain seven more years in Laban's service. When all the neighbors heard of this new arrangement, they came to Laban and asked him for their pledges. "Your pledges," said Laban, "were sold, and with the money I prepared you that wonderful feast." They grew very angry at Laban because they were compelled to redeem their pledges from those who had sold Laban the meat and wine. Laban's neighbors then said: "He shall no longer be called Laban, the son of Bethuel, but Arami [*i.e.,* deceiver], because he deceived all the people of this place."

Jacob stayed seven more years with Laban for his daughter Rachel. Jacob's wives bore him eleven sons and one daughter while in the house of Laban. At the end of fourteen years, Rebekah sent her nurse Deborah, the daughter of Uz, accompanied by two of her slaves, to Jacob. She instructed them to deliver a message to Jacob that he return to the house of his father in the land of Canaan. When Jacob received this message from his mother, he came to his father-in-law and said to him: "Now, it is time for me

to take my wives and children for whom I have served you, and go back to my father's house."

Laban said: "You well know that God was with me, and blessed me on account of you, and made me very rich. Now tell me whatever wage you desire, and I shall not refuse it to you." Jacob did not care to remain any longer with Laban. But the latter insisted, and Jacob said: "If you will give me as my wage for serving you, all the speckled and spotted ones that are born among your goats, and the red ones that are born among your sheep, I will remain with you."

Laban agreed, and Jacob remained with him for six more years. During this time Laban changed Jacob's wages ten times, but God was with Jacob, and he grew very rich. Most of the sheep and goats that were born among the flock of Laban were speckled, spotted, and red. Jacob became the owner of many thousands of sheep, cattle, camels and donkeys, and also of many slaves.

Chapter XVIII

JACOB'S RETURN TO CANAAN

1. *Jacob Pursued by Laban*

AT the end of twenty years, Jacob noticed that Laban and his sons grew envious of him and were not so kind to him as they had been. Then God said to Jacob: "Return to the land of thy fathers, and I will be with thee." Jacob knew that Laban would not let him go away. Jacob sent a very swift messenger, his son Naphtali, to Rachel and Leah to call them to the field where he was tending his flock. When they came there, he said to them: "God appeared to me last night, and ordered me to leave for my father's house."

"Whatever God said, we are ready to do," they declared.

When Laban was gone to shear his sheep, Jacob got ready to depart. In the meantime Rachel went to her father's chamber and stole all the idols. She said to herself: "If I steal the idols from my father, he will perhaps stop worshiping them." Rachel concealed the idols among her clothes. When Jacob got ready to go, he took his wives and children and all his flock, and set out

for the land of Canaan. On the third day after Jacob's departure, Laban was told that Jacob had fled. Angered by this news, Laban went to his house to inquire of his idols whither Jacob had gone. Finding that his idols had been stolen, he took his neighbors with him and ran in pursuit of Jacob. After a seven days' march, he overtook him on the mountain of Gilead. Laban intended to kill Jacob and take away all his property.

At that moment, an angel named Saftier presented himself before God and said: "Have no mercy on Jacob, because he sinned against Thee, in that he forsook his father and mother for twenty years, and did not serve them as it behooves a son to serve his parents." Then Righteousness and Mercy appeared before God and said: "Let Jacob be pitied for the sake of righteousness and for the sake of his fathers Abraham and Isaac." And Saftier the angel continued and said: "Judge of all the worlds, six years ago Rebekah sent word to Jacob asking him to return home, but he refused and instead remained all this time with Laban in order to reap more wealth. Therefore, he deserves no pity." When Righteousness and Mercy heard this, they remained silent. At that moment, however, Work came and presented himself before the Lord and said: "For twenty years Jacob served Laban with all his might. He suffered heat by day, and cold at night. Sleep never touched his eyes, and he kept watching the sheep which were

entrusted to him by his father-in-law, as a man watches the apple of his eye. Many a time he risked his own life in order to save a sheep or a lamb from the clutches of the lion or the wolf. And when he departed from Laban, he did not touch anything that did not belong to him. Wherefore, then, should he be killed?" When the angel Saftier heard these words, he withdrew from the presence of God.

Then God came to Laban in a dream and said to him: "Take heed, Laban, that thou speak not to Jacob either good or evil." In the morning Laban overtook Jacob on the other side of the mountain of Gilead, and said to him: "What have you done to me? Why did you flee from me without giving me a chance to kiss my daughters and grandchildren? You carried them off, as if they had been captured by the sword; and not satisfied with all that, you even stole my gods. Now, it is in my power to do you harm, but the God of your fathers spoke to me last night, saying: 'Take heed lest thou speakest to Jacob either good or evil.' "

"All my tents are open to you," said Jacob; "you may search them all over for your gods. With whomever they may be found, he shall suffer death." When Laban was unable to find his images, Jacob rebuked him, and said: "You have looked all over my tents, and found nothing belonging to you; why, then, did you run so hotly

after me?" Laban, finding no answer to the words of Jacob, made a treaty with him and returned home. On arriving there, he found that all his household goods had been stolen from him. Angered at this, he sent his son Beor, accompanied by ten of his men, with a message to Esau reading thus: "I, your uncle Laban, wish to inform you that your brother Jacob was with me for twenty years. When he came here, he was penniless and poor. I kept him with me, gave him my two daughters as wives, and now he is very wealthy. One day when I went to shear my flock, he escaped from me secretly and has gone to the land of Canaan. And what is more, he even stole my gods. Now, go out to meet him, and do to him as you desire."

2. *Esau Desires to Wreak Vengeance*

When Esau heard this, he reminded himself of his father's blessings which Jacob had deprived him of, and went to meet Jacob. The messengers of Laban, who were very honest men, upon leaving the house of Esau, went to the land of Canaan and informed Rebekah of Esau's intentions. She became greatly troubled, and sent out seventy-two men to Jacob that they might be of some assistance to him in the fight. When the men came to Jacob, he recognized them, and asked after his parents' welfare. "They are well," they said, "and your mother has commanded us to tell you that

when Esau approaches you, you shall implore him to spare your life. Give him many presents, perhaps he will be conciliated by them." When Jacob heard the words of his mother, he wept bitterly and said: "I shall do whatever my mother tells me to." Jacob then took some of his men and sent them as messengers to Esau, to speak to him thus: "For twenty years I was with Laban. I worked for him with all my might, and God gave me riches, although Laban changed my wages many a time. Now I am going to see my father and mother. And I beg you not to think that our father's blessing has enriched me. And I beseech you not to do me any harm."

"I know," said Esau to the messengers, when they had delivered this message to him, "that Jacob stole away from the house of Laban. Now I shall wreak vengeance on him not only for my own sake, but also for the sake of my uncle Laban." When Jacob heard this answer, he was filled with anxiety. He said to himself: "If I am forced to fight my brother, I am going to shed innocent blood, for in the battle some of his men might suffer death." He therefore prayed to God thus: "O Lord God, when I was on the way to my uncle Laban, Thou didst promise to be with me and to watch over me wherever I went. But since then many years have passed, and I may have sinned against Thee and thus forfeited Thy favor. I therefore beseech Thee, O Lord, even if I do

not deserve Thy protection, be with me yet, so that no innocent blood may be shed."

3. *Esau Beaten by Angels*

God listened to Jacob's prayer, and sent down three angels. They appeared before Esau and his men in the form of hundreds of thousands of warriors, riding on powerful steeds, and bearing all kinds of weapons. They divided themselves into four columns, and when the first division was sighted by Esau he trembled greatly and said: "To whom do you belong?"

"We are the servants of Jacob," they said. "Who can stand against us?" When Esau heard this, he fell off his horse in great terror, while his men fled. Esau called out to his men to return, and they obeyed.

"And who art thou?" the angels asked him.

"I am Esau," he answered, "and these are my men."

"Smite them all and have no pity on them," said the leader of the angels. And the angels smote Esau and his men.

Then the second group of angels passed by, and they asked Esau: "Who art thou?"

"I am a grandson of Abraham," replied Esau proudly.

"Beat Esau and his men, without mercy," came the command of the leader of the angels to his group.

Then the third group of the heavenly host came along, and asked: "Who art thou?"

"I am the son of Isaac, who was bound on Mount Moriah, to be brought up as an offering to God," answered Esau.

"Smite them all and have no pity on them," was the reply.

When the fourth group arrived they asked: "To whom dost thou belong?"

"I belong to my brother Jacob," replied the terrified Esau; "I have not seen him for the last twenty years; now I am on the way to meet him and inquire of him after his welfare."

"Were it not for the sake of Jacob," they said, "we would leave not one of thy men alive." When Esau heard this, he was panic-stricken and resolved not to fight with his brother, because he saw that God was with Jacob.

4. *Jacob Wrestles with an Angel*

Jacob took part of all of his possessions and sent them as a gift to his brother Esau. He took some oxen, camels, cows, and mules, and, dividing them into three droves, gave them to his servants. "Pass on before me and leave space between one drove and another," said Jacob to his servants. "And when you meet Esau, tell him that it is a gift to my lord Esau from his servant Jacob." The servant passed on with the herds, while he, his wives and children, stayed over night in the

camp. At midnight Jacob arose, and took his wives and children across the brook of Jabbok. Then he took across his oxen, his flock and his tents. On the other side of the brook, Jacob bethought himself of a few jars which he had left on the other side. Not wanting to send any of his servants for them because the servants were very tired and overworked, he went himself to fetch the jars. As Jacob was putting the jars in order, he noticed a human form standing near him.

"Who are you?" inquired Jacob.

"I am a shepherd," said he; "I worked very hard to-day and now I am very tired. Look at that big herd of cattle behind me. I must take them all across the brook, and I am weary. I cannot do it now. Pray take all these oxen and sheep across the brook for me and I will carry your jars."

Jacob agreed and began to carry the lambs across the brook. But to his great surprise the more sheep he carried across, the more there remained behind. There was no end of cattle, though Jacob worked almost all night. At last he lost all patience. He fell upon the shepherd and caught him by the throat, crying out: "Are you a magician? Is this a magic flock of cattle?"

"Dost thou wish to know what I am?" said the stranger. "I will show thee." Thereupon he touched the ground with his little finger, and

The shepherd assumed the form of an angel and wrestled with him

flames burst forth, which consumed all the cattle. Jacob was not daunted by these wonderful acts. The shepherd then assumed the form of an angel, and wrestled with him till daybreak. The angel, angered because he did not come out victorious in the strife, touched the thigh of Jacob. This touch put the thigh out of joint and caused Jacob to limp.

As dawn drew nigh, the angel said: "Pray, Jacob, let me go, because it is near dawn."

"Art thou a thief that thou art afraid of the light of day?" asked Jacob.

"At daybreak all angels assemble before the Almighty to sing His praise," said the angel; "pray let me fly to heaven."

"I will not let thee go," said Jacob, "and the angels will sing the praises of God without thee."

"Should I fail to appear once, I shall not be allowed to participate in the singing any more," pleaded the angel.

But Jacob said: "I will not let thee go, except thou bless me; for when angels appeared to my grandfather Abraham, they were accustomed to bless him."

"They had been sent down to bless him; while I was not sent down to bless thee," argued the angel.

At this moment, many troupes of angels with their leaders came down from heaven and said to

the angel detained by Jacob: "The time to sing praises has come; make haste and fly with us to heaven, lest the time for singing pass."

Jacob refused to give him permission, and the angel began to sing praises on earth, while the angels in heaven responded and sang with him. At last the angel blessed Jacob and said to him: "Thy name shall be changed into Israel, for thou hast wrestled with an angel of God, and thou hast come out victorious."

When in heaven, the angel was rebuked by God: "Why didst thou hurt my priest Jacob?"

"Thou hast sufficient angels in heaven to minister to Thee as priests," replied the angel.

"But on earth, there is no other that can fill his position," said God.

The angel then begged of Raphael to fly down and heal Jacob. The healing angel immediately flew down, and cured Jacob's thigh. The victorious Israel then crossed the brook, and together with his escort continued his journey.

5. *Jacob Meets Esau*

About mid-day Jacob noticed at a distance his brother Esau and the great multitude that was with him. Jacob prayed to God to be saved from the hand of Esau. When he had finished praying, he prepared for war with his brother. First he ordered the mothers to take care of their children. Then he divided all his men into two companies

and he placed over them Damesek and Alinus, the two sons of Eliezer, while he himself marched in front. "For," thought he, "if Esau has made up his mind to shed blood, let him kill me first. His anger will then abate, and he may spare the women and the children."

As Esau approached his brother, and recalled the beating he had received at the hands of the angels on the way, he thought to himself: "I will not kill my brother Jacob with bow and arrow, but I will bite him." But God was with Jacob, and Jacob's neck became as hard as ivory. Esau ran to meet his brother, and as he embraced his brother Jacob, he bit him on the neck but all his teeth broke on the ivory-like flesh of Jacob. Esau wept bitterly on the neck of his brother, not for joy and love, but because of his terrible pain.

"Who are all those people that I met on the way?" asked Esau after his pains had somewhat abated.

"They are my people," said Jacob, "and I sent those cattle to you as a present."

Esau at first refused to accept the cattle from his brother, but when Jacob insisted, Esau accepted the present, and then took leave of his brother. Jacob continued his journey, and encamped near the city of Shechem. There he built many tents for the poor and taught the people of the city to be just and kind in their dealings with one another.

Chapter XIX

THE WAR WITH THE NINEVITES

1. *The First Day of the War*

JACOB thereafter settled in the neighborhood of Shechem. The prince of Shechem fell in love with Dinah, Jacob's daughter. The prince kidnaped Dinah and kept her in his palace against her will. To punish the wrong done to their sister Simon and Levi, the two young sons of Jacob, destroyed the whole city of Shechem.

Jacob and his sons then departed from there. They had marched for eight days when they encountered a very powerful army, which had been sent from Nineveh to conquer the whole world. Coming to the neighborhood of Shechem, this army heard what Simon and Levi had done to the city and decided to make war on Jacob.

"Fear not," said Jacob to his sons, "God will help you fight this mighty host."

With sword in hand, Jacob advanced toward the enemy, and killed twelve thousand of them.

"Father, you are tired and exhausted," said Judah; "let me fight the enemy alone."

"My son," said Jacob, "I know your strength

and bravery. None in the world can compare to you, and I entrust the leadership to you."

Judah attacked the enemy and slew many thousands of tried and famous warriors. The battle raged hot in the front and the rear, and Levi hastened to Judah's aid, and together they won a great victory over the Ninevites.

Alarmed about their fate, the Ninevites said: "How long shall we fight with these devils? Let us return to our land." But their king restrained them, saying: "You heroes, you men of might and valor, have you lost your senses that you ask to return to your land? Is this your bravery? After you have subdued many kingdoms and countries, you are not able to hold out against twelve men. If the nations and the kings whom we have conquered hear of this, they will rise against us as one man, and scorn us, and do with us as they please. Take courage, men of the great city of Nineveh, so that your name may be exalted, and you become not a mockery in the mouth of your enemies."

The words of their king inspired the warriors to continue the war. They sent messengers to all the lands to ask for help, and reinforced by their allies, the Ninevites assaulted Jacob a second time. Jacob spoke to his sons, saying: "Take courage and fight against your enemies." His twelve sons then took up their stand in twelve different places, and Jacob, with a sword in his right hand and a

bow in his left, advanced to the combat. It was a desperate encounter for him. He had to ward off the enemy to the right and to the left. Nevertheless he inflicted severe blows, and when a band of two thousand men beset him, he leaped up in the air and vanished from their sight. Twenty-two thousand he slew on this day, and when evening came he planned to flee under cover of darkness. But suddenly ninety thousand men appeared, and he was compelled to continue the fight. He rushed at them with his sword, but it broke, and he had to defend himself by grinding huge rocks into lime powder, throwing it at the enemy and blinding them so that they could see nothing. Luckily, darkness fell and Jacob could permit himself to take a rest for the night.

2. *The Second Day of War*

But the army reappeared on the morrow ready for battle again, to take revenge on Jacob and his children. When the enemy blew their trumpets, Jacob said to his sons: "Go forth and fight with your enemies." Issachar and Gad said that this day they would take the combat upon themselves, and their father bade them do it while their brothers kept guard and held themselves in readiness to aid and relieve the two combatants if they should show signs of exhaustion.

Issachar and Gad slew forty-eight thousand warriors, and put to flight twelve myriads more.

These concealed themselves in a cave. Thereupon Issachar and Gad fetched trees from the woods, piled the trunks up in front of the opening of the cave, and set fire to them. When the fire blazed forth with a fierce flame, the entrapped warriors spoke saying: "Why should we stay in this cave and perish with the smoke and the heat? Rather let us sally forth and fight with our enemies, for then we may have a chance of saving ourselves." They left the cave, going through openings at the side, and they attacked Issachar and Gad in front and behind. Dan and Naphtali saw the plight of their brothers and ran to their assistance. They laid about them with their swords, hewing a way for themselves to Issachar and Gad, and, joining them, helped to ward off the foe.

3. *The Third Day of War*

It was the third day of the conflict, and the Ninevites were reinforced by an army as numerous as the sand on the seashore. All the sons of Jacob joined in the fray, and they routed the host. But when they pursued the enemy, the fugitives faced about and resumed the battle, saying: "Why should we run away? Let us rather fight them, perhaps we may be victorious, now they are weary." A stubborn combat followed, and when Jacob saw the strong counter-attack upon his children, he himself sprang into the thick of the battle and dealt blows right and left. Nevertheless the

heathens were victorious, and succeeded in separating Judah from his brethren. As soon as Jacob was aware of the peril of his son, he whistled. Judah responded, and his brethren hastened to his aid. Judah was fatigued and parched with thirst, and there was no water for him to drink, but he dug his finger into the ground with such force, that water gushed forth in the sight of the whole army. Then said the Ninevite warriors to one another: "Let us flee from these devils, for God fights on their side," whereupon they all fled for their lives, pursued by the sons of Jacob. Soldiers without number they slew, and then they went back to their tents. On their return, they noticed that Joseph was missing, and they feared he had been killed or taken captive. Thereupon fleet-footed Naphtali ran after the retreating enemy, to search for Joseph. He found him still pursuing the retreating Ninevite host. He joined Joseph, and together they killed countless soldiers.

At the end of the war Jacob continued his journey unhindered to his father Isaac.

Chapter XX

THE GREAT WARS

1. *The War with Jashub*

SEVEN years passed after these events, and Jacob and his sons returned to the neighborhood of Shechem to make their dwelling there.

The kings of the Amorites, led by Jashub, the king of Tapuah, assembled their armies to fight the small group of people belonging to Jacob. "Is it not enough," they said, "that they have slain all the men of Shechem? Should they now be allowed to take possession of their land, too?" Judah, the lion-hearted, took ten of his servants and with them ran in front of his brothers to meet Jashub in combat. Now, Jashub was a mighty warrior, and was clad in mail from top to toe. He was mounted on a powerful steed, and cast his spears on all sides without ever missing his aim. Judah feared neither Jashub's prowess nor his sure aim. When there was a distance of about thirty cubits between him and Jashub, he picked up a very heavy stone, and with all his might he struck the king on his helmet, knocking him off his horse. Jashub's body-guard rushed to his assist-

ance and surrounded Judah. But Judah drew his sword and killed all the forty warriors who formed the body-guard of King Jashub. The king, seeing that he was left alone to fight Judah, drew his sword to cut off Judah's head. Quickly Judah raised his shield to ward off the blow, but the shield was shattered to pieces. Judah wrested Jashub's shield from him; then, swinging his sword with great might, he cut off Jashub's feet above the ankles. The king fell to the ground, his sword slipped from his grasp, and Judah, hurriedly seizing the sword, cut off the head of Jashub. After Judah's wonderful feat, his brothers rallied to him and killed about fiften thousand of the allied armies. The enemy, noticing the marvelous strength of Judah and his brothers, became greatly terrified and did not care to remain any longer on the battle-field. Their generals and kings ordered them not to flee, but they heeded not. The sons of Jacob then pursued the fleeing armies up to the gate of the city of Hazor.

On that day, three of the servants of Jacob fell in battle. Judah and his brothers, enraged at the death of the three servants, approached the walls of the city of Hazor, and wished to enter its gates in order to wage war against the remnant of the armies that had taken refuge within its walls. But four mighty warriors were stationed at the gate with drawn swords, and refused to let them enter the city. Thereupon Naphtali leaped into their

midst, and with his sword killed two of the warriors. The other two ran for their lives, but Naphtali pursued them, and killed them likewise. Naphtali and his brothers then tried to enter the city, but when they passed through the gate they found another wall surrounding the city. They looked for the entrance, but they failed to find it. Judah then jumped to the top of the wall, and Simon and Levi jumped after him. The three of them leaped from the wall into the city, and fought with the army that was stationed there. The warriors' cries were heard by the remainder of Jacob's sons, who leaped to the top of the wall to see the cause of the outcry. On seeing them, the people of the city begged for peace, to which the sons of Jacob consented.

2. *The Fall of Sarton*

The following day Jacob and his sons were informed that the people of Sarton had gathered to fight them. Now, Sarton was a very strongly fortified city, surrounded by a ditch fifty cubits deep and forty cubits wide. The people of Sarton removed all bridges because they feared the approach of Jacob and his sons. The armies that were stationed at the top of the wall when Jacob and his sons approached, mocked at them when they looked for a passage to enter the city. The sons of Jacob became angry at this mockery, and they all leaped across the ditch. They found the

gates of the city locked, and when they tried to force an entrance, the armies on the top of the walls began hurling stones and shooting arrows at them. Judah then jumped to the top of the wall on the eastern side of the city, Gad did likewise on the west, Simon and Levi on the north, and Dan and Reuben on the south. Issachar and Naphtali then broke the iron gates, and they all came into the city and vanquished the armies that were stationed there.

After they had left Sarton, the sons of Jacob happened to pass a vast tower. Out of that tower twelve mighty warriors came forth and assailed Simon and Levi. The warriors succeeded in breaking the shields of Simon and Levi, and even wounded Levi. When one of the warriors was about to strike him again, Levi snatched the sword away from him and with it killed the giant warrior. When the remaining eleven warriors saw one of their comrades lying dead at their feet, they rushed upon Levi to avenge his death. Simon, noticing Levi's plight, uttered a piercing war-cry, which was heard by his brother Judah at a distance. Upon hearing this, Judah, Naphtali, and some of their men ran to the assistance of their brothers. The four brothers wrestled with the eleven warriors from afternoon until evening, but without success. Naphtali then returned to his father Jacob and informed him about it. Jacob hurried with Naphtali to the scene of battle, and

shot three arrows with which he killed three warriors in succession. The remaining eight warriors, seeing the enemy both in the front and in the rear, fled. But Dan and Asher also came to the assistance of their brothers and Jacob and his sons pursued the warriors and killed them all.

3. *Judah on the Wall of Goash*

Jacob and his sons, informed that the people of Goash were mustering their armies within the city to wage war against them, marched upon the city. Now Goash was a very large city, strongly fortified and with three walls around it, while the people inhabiting it were famous warriors. Approaching the walls of the city, Jacob's sons found the gates locked, and on the top of the outer wall were about five hundred men. The people of Goash placed a very big army on the outskirts of the city, as an ambush for Jacob and his sons. The latter, who were unaware of this ambush, approached the gates of the city with the intention of breaking them down. But as soon as they drew near, the hidden army suddenly arose from its place, and began throwing stones, spears and swords at them, while the people on the top of the wall likewise rained all kinds of missiles down upon them. Judah, realizing the danger, uttered his accustomed war-cry, which was so powerful, that some of the people on the top of the wall fell down from great terror. Judah and his brothers

again made an attempt to batter down the gates, but the stones and missiles hurled at them from the top of the wall were so dangerous, that they were compelled to go to the eastern entrance of the city. But there also they could not force the gate open. They then went to the southern entrance of the city, and there, too, they were unsuccessful. The people of Goash then ridiculed Jacob and his sons, and said: "You are no match for us. You were able to conquer other cities, but you will not be able to conquer us." And while thus ridiculing them, they shot spears and arrows at them. Hearing this insult, Judah jumped upon the top of the wall and uttered such a great cry, that many of the warriors on top of the wall fell down and were killed, but at that moment, the sword slipped out of his hand and fell to the ground. The mighty warriors of Goash noticed that Judah remained without a sword and gathered around him to hurl him from the top of the wall. Twenty of the bravest warriors approached Judah with drawn swords to kill him. Finding himself in a helpless state, he again uttered his usual lion's war-cry, and the twenty warriors, terrified by this cry, dropped their swords and fled. Judah at once snatched one of the swords, pursued the twenty warriors, and knocked them off the wall.

A certain man named Arud, who was considered the strongest and the bravest man in Goash, came up to the top of the wall, and was ready to

strike Judah with his sword. Judah quickly raised his shield, but the blow which Arud struck was so heavy that it broke Judah's shield in two, and inflicted a heavy wound upon his head. He uttered a cry of pain, and Arud, terrified by this cry, fell off the top of the wall, hitting the ground at the place where Jacob and his sons were standing, and was killed by them. Dan, hearing Judah's cries, jumped to the top of the wall to aid his brother. The people on the first wall, scared by the presence of Judah's heroic brother, ran to the top of the middle wall, and from there threw stones and spears at them. The two brothers were in a terrible plight, because arrows and stones hailed upon them from all sides. Judah mustered courage, jumped from the outer wall to the second wall and from the second to the third, and Dan jumped after him, and from the last wall the two jumped into the city and fought against all the inhabitants. Jacob and his sons, seeing that Judah and Dan were no longer on the wall, sent Naphtali to discover the cause. Naphtali jumped to the first wall, then to the second, and finally to the third, and looking down into the city discovered that Judah and Dan were fighting against the entire population of the city of Goash. Thereupon he gave the sign, and Jacob and his sons approached the gates of the city, forced them open, and joined Judah and Dan in the fight. By their

combined efforts the famous warriors of Goash were defeated.

Leaving the city of Goash, Jacob and his sons encountered three warriors who had been hiding in some secret place. One of them, noticing that Zebulun was of short stature, rushed upon him and knocked him down. Jacob ran to Zebulun's aid, and slew the warrior with his sword. The second of the warriors then sprang at Jacob with the intention of killing him, but Simon and Levi came to Jacob's aid, and killed the warrior with their swords, while Jacob ran after the third warrior and killed him also. On the sixth day of the war, Jacob and his sons returned to their tents. And on the seventh day, all the kings who were at war with Jacob and his sons held a council and decided to make peace with them. When they came to Jacob to sue for peace, he told them they must first give up all their weapons of war, and then sign a treaty. They did so, and there was peace between Jacob and the kings of Canaan ever after.

4. *The War With Esau*

At the end of that year, Leah died. Jacob and his sons mourned for her. Esau thought to himself: "Now I have a chance to fall upon my brother and kill him." So he gathered four thousand men, armed them and proceeded to besiege Hebron, where Jacob then lived. Jacob and his household had not expected any attack at that

time, for they were in mourning. Esau and his men came to the top of the wall surrounding the city and began shooting arrows at them. Jacob begged his brother not to wage war against him at that time. Esau's only reply was to aim arrows at him. Jacob then pleaded with his sons not to follow Esau's example. But Judah, in spite of his father's remonstration, shot an arrow at Esau and wounded him. As Esau was being carried away, he ordered his men not to move from the spot before Jacob and his sons were killed. When Judah heard this order, he quickly gathered all his brothers and servants and they sallied forth and attacked the four thousand men. Judah and his brothers fought so bravely against them, that most of them were slain and the remainder fled in confusion. Jacob and his sons, being very tired from the fighting, did not care to pursue them. Esau then sent messengers to make peace with Jacob, and thereafter there was peace between them until the death of their father Isaac.

Chapter XXI

JOSEPH AND HIS BROTHERS

1. *The Dreams*

JOSEPH, when yet very young, was deprived of the tender care of his mother Rachel. Bilhah, formerly the handmaiden of Rachel and then the wife of Jacob, carried little Joseph into her tent and took care of him.

Joseph grew up to be a kind lad, and he always kept company with the sons of Bilhah and Zilpah, whom the sons of Leah were accustomed to abuse. Old Jacob taught him the Torah, and he proved to be a bright and willing pupil.

One day he came to his father and said: "My brothers, the sons of Leah, always abuse my other brothers, the sons of Bilhah and Zilpah, and call them the sons of handmaidens." The aged father at once ordered his sons to come to him from the field, and said: "I am old, and I do not know the day of my death; now, therefore, listen to my words. When I die, everything I possess will be yours, and you will all become rich; but God forbid that you abuse one another, or that you insult

the sons of Bilhah and Zilpah by calling them the sons of handmaidens."

"Why did our father see fit to recall us from the field in the middle of the day?" they asked one another on leaving their father's tent. "Somebody must have slandered us." "I know who slandered you," said one of the lads of Jacob's household. "I was present when Joseph reported all that to your father." From that time on his brothers began to hate Joseph, and when Jacob made him a beautiful coat of many colors, they hated him still more. "For," said they, "our father loves Joseph more than all his other sons."

One morning Joseph related to his father a dream that he had dreamt: He and his brothers were binding sheaves in the field, when his brothers' sheaves arose and bowed to his sheaf. His brothers, hearing this dream, hated him still more.

Joseph dreamed another dream, which he likewise related to his father and brothers. "In my dream," said he, "I saw the sun, the moon and eleven stars bow down before me." His brothers' hatred now was mingled with jealousy, but Jacob no longer doubted the meaning of his dreams.

2. *Joseph Is Thrown Into a Pit*

One day the brothers went to pasture their father's flocks in Shechem. Then said Jacob to Joseph: "Do not your brothers pasture the flocks in Shechem? I fear that the Hivites may come

upon them and kill them, and repay me for what Simon and Levi did to Shechem. Now, my son, hasten to your brothers and see how they and the flock are faring and bring word back to me."

"I know," thought Joseph, "that my brothers hate me and will do me harm when they find me alone in the field. But I must do the will of my father." So Joseph arose and went to Shechem. Arriving at Shechem and not finding his brothers there, he began to wander about in the field. The Angel Gabriel, in the likeness of a man, found him and said: "Whom art thou looking for in these pasturelands?"

"I am looking for my brothers," answered Joseph; "pray tell me where they are pasturing their flocks."

"Thy brothers have journeyed hence, for I heard them say, 'Let us go to Dothan.' "

Joseph went to search for them in Dothan. Joseph's brothers were preparing to dine, and Issachar said: "Brothers, let us gather together some stones and make a heap on which we can eat."

"Your words are wise," replied Simon; "but I am thinking about Joseph; he always embitters our lives by slandering us. If he only happened to come here now, I would tear him to pieces."

"I hate him very much," said Issachar, "but I fear his strange dreams."

"There is nothing to fear," retorted Simon; "just

as the hungry man dreams of a good meal, so does Joseph dream of reigning over us."

Simon had scarcely finished speaking, when they saw Joseph approaching. "Good!" they all shouted as one; "here comes the dreamer; let us kill him and cast him into one of the pits."

"Brothers, shedding blood is a sin," said Reuben. "Cast him into one of the pits in the wilderness, but lay no hand on him." Reuben intended to save him from their hands and bring him back to their father.

Joseph's brothers fell upon him, and stripped him. They passed by a pit which was partly filled with pieces of wood, but they did not cast him in. They then came across a pit full of serpents and adders, and into it they cast Joseph. Joseph wept bitterly and begged his brothers for mercy, but they would not listen to him. But God in heaven listened to his prayer, and He ordered the serpents and the adders to hide themselves and stay in the holes and crevices of the pit, so that they might do him no harm.

3. *Joseph Is Sold for Twenty Pieces of Silver*

The sons of Jacob sat down by the pit to eat, but the cries and supplications of Joseph touched their hearts and gave them no rest. They therefore went to a place where his cries could not be heard.

Reuben told his brothers that it was his turn on that day to wait upon their aged father Jacob, and went away. But instead of going to his father's tent he went to a nearby mountain, and there waited in hiding for night to come when he could save Joseph from the hands of his brothers and bring him to his father.

When the brothers finished their meal, a caravan of Ishmaelites passed by, and Judah said: "What profit is there for us to shed our brother's blood? Let us sell him to the Ishmaelites." His brothers agreed with him.

At that moment some Midianites passed by. The day was very hot and the merchants suffered greatly from thirst. One of the company noticed a large flock of birds hover over a certain place. ""There is a well of water there!" he shouted with great joy to his companions, pointing to the spot over which the birds were hovering. They all ran in great haste to the pit, but instead of water they found a lovely boy in it, who was exhausted from weeping and hunger. For these birds were ordered by God to hover there in order to shelter Joseph with the shadow of their wings from the hot rays of the sun.

"Who are you, and who brought you here?" asked the chief of the caravan. But Joseph was so weakened that he could give no answer. They then pulled him out of the pit and were about to

take him away with them. But when the sons of Jacob saw that the Midianites were ready to depart with Joseph, they approached and said: "Why do you take our slave away from us? We put him into this pit as a punishment because he became disobedient. Now, return our slave to us."

"This boy does not look like a slave," said the Midianites, "nor does he look like the son of a slave. Do you mean to tell us that you are the masters of this handsome, noble-looking lad? You are speaking nothing but falsehood."

"Give us back our slave," said his brothers, "lest you die."

The Midianites drew their swords and were ready to fight them, but Simon leaped at them and with his thunder-like voice uttered such a shout that the swords dropped from the hands of the Midianites, and they all fell on their faces and begged for mercy. "You say that your slave is disobedient," they said, "sell him to us and we will pay you whatever he is worth."

"What price will you pay for him?" the brothers asked.

"This lad is very delicate and unfit for work. We will give you for him twenty pieces of silver," answered the Midianites.

"Very well," the brothers said, "each and every one of us will buy for himself a pair of sandals with his two pieces of silver."

4. *The Grief-Stricken Father*

At nightfall Reuben returned to the pit and cried: "Joseph! Joseph!" Receiving no answer, he went down into the pit and groped about for Joseph's body, but Joseph was not there. He went to his brothers and said: "Joseph is not there, and what shall I do now? How will I be able to see the grief of our aged father?"

"Our brother Judah is guilty," they all said, "for he told us to sell him, and we obeyed. Had he told us to return him to our father, we would have obeyed him." The sons of Jacob then arose and swore to one another to tell no one what had happened and whoever violated the oath was to be punished with death.

Then they slew a lamb, and dipped the garment of Joseph in the blood, and with a spear they pierced many holes through it. They gave it to Naphtali and told him to say this to their father Jacob: "We gathered in our cattle, and came near Shechem, where we found this garment on the road. Now, discern whether it is the coat of your son or not." Now Naphtali was very swift of foot, even swifter than the stag. So light and swift was his step that he could run on the top of corn-stalks without breaking or bending them. With great speed Naphtali went home to Jacob his father, holding Joseph's coat in his hand.

Jacob looked at the garment and said: "I see

that it is the coat of my son. A beast has devoured him. Joseph was torn to pieces."

Toward evening the other sons returned home, and their grief-stricken father asked them where and when they had found the coat of Joseph. They merely repeated the story already told by Naphtali, and the aged father mourned and wept for his beloved Joseph. The sons, seeing the grief of their father, regretted what they had done. Judah sat down next to his father, put his head between his knees, and wept together with his father. All Jacob's sons tried to comfort him, but in vain, for he would not be comforted.

The aged Isaac heard of his son's misfortune, and he, too, came to comfort him. Isaac knew that Joseph was alive, for God had appeared to him and told him of all that had happened, but he did not wish to tell Jacob. "If God does not care to tell Jacob what has happened," thought Isaac, "how can I tell him?"

"My sons," said Jacob to them on the following day, "take your bows and arrows and go out to the field. There you may find the body of my beloved Joseph. Be sure to catch alive the beast that ye see first and bring it to me."

So they went and caught a monstrous wolf, and they brought him to their father, saying: "This is the beast that we first met and we have brought it to you."

"Why didst thou tear my beloved Joseph?" in-

quired Jacob of the wolf. "My son possessed no bows and arrows and had no evil intention against thee."

God opened the mouth of the wolf, and the wolf said: "Son of Isaac, I have not killed thy son. I am a wolf out of a foreign land. One morning I lost my young one, and I have been straying in all directions to find it. Is it likely that I, mourning over the loss of my cub, should attack and kill a young prophet?"

Touched by the wolf's words, Jacob let him go free.

Chapter XXII

JOSEPH THE SLAVE

1. *On the Tomb of His Mother*

THE Midianites on their way regretted having bought Joseph. "It is likely that this good-looking lad was stolen," they said to one another, "and should he be found in our possession, we shall be put to death." They happened to meet a caravan of Ishmaelites with camels laden with all kinds of delicious perfumes. They offered to sell Joseph to the Ishmaelites for the same amount they had bought him. The Ishmaelites made the bargain and made Joseph mount one of their camels.

Joseph did not know where the Ishmaelites were taking him. When he heard one of them say that they would soon enter the land of Egypt, he broke out in tears. The Ishmaelites made him alight from the camel, and when he still continued his wailing, one of them struck him in the face. The hand of the smiter at once withered, but the Ishmaelites did not know that this was on account of Joseph and they continued to ill-treat him.

Joseph went along with the Ishmaelites till they reached his mother's tomb. It was moonlight, and

the caravan rested. Grief overcame Joseph. He fell upon the grave, burst forth into bitter tears and cried: "O, mother, mother! I am an outcast and slave, I, the child of the wife Jacob loved best. When you were dying, you bade my father look at me and be comforted for his loss. O, mother, mother! have you no thought for your son? Awake and see the sad plight of your child; shake off your sleep; be my defense against my brothers, and comfort my father. Awake and stand up to judge my quarrel! Awake and plead my cause with God! Awake and look upon the desolation of the soul of my father who cherished you, and who for fourteen years served in bondage for you, his beloved Rachel! Console him, I pray you, and by the voice that he loved soothe the grief of his last days."

A low voice issued from the tomb: "My son! my son Joseph! my child! I have heard your cries. I know all you have suffered, and my grief is as deep as the sea. But put your trust in God. Rise, my child, and have patience. If you knew the future, you would be comforted."

Annoyed by the cries of Joseph, the Ishmaelites drove him away from the tomb.

"Bring me back to my father and he will make you rich," pleaded Joseph.

"If you had been the son of a rich man, you would not have been sold for twenty pieces of silver," said the Ishmaelites, and they began to

Joseph fell upon his mother's grave, and burst forth into bitter tears

beat him mercilessly. God in heaven heard the groaning of Joseph and he darkened the sky with a threatening cloud. There was lightning and thunder, and a terrific wind blew from every direction. The camels refused to obey their masters, although they were severely punished by them.

"Let us get rid of this troublesome slave," said the Ishmaelites to one another. "Let us hurry on to Egypt and there sell him."

2. *In Potiphar's House*

The sun was about to set, when the caravan entered Heliopolis, the chief city of Egypt. The next day Joseph was placed for sale before the palace of the king. All the wealthy ladies of Heliopolis sent their husbands or relatives to bid for the beautiful youth, but he was purchased by Potiphar, the king's treasurer.

Zuleika, Potiphar's wife, received him very kindly, gave him new clothes and a garden-house in which to live.

Joseph proved to be a very faithful servant, and his master became fond of him. God was with him and caused to prosper whatever he did.

One day, Potiphar said to Joseph: "Bring me a a cup of very hot water," and when it was brought to him, he said: "I was mistaken, I wanted luke-warm water and not very hot."

"The water is luke-warm," said Joseph, and

when Potiphar found it to be so, he was greatly surprised. "But I wanted wine and not water," said Potiphar. "Let my master drink of it and he will find wine in this very cup," answered Joseph.

Having found wine in the cup, Potiphar said to Joseph: "Here are my keys and from to-day on you will be the ruler of my house and my treasures, for I see that your God is with you."

Zuleika loved Joseph greatly. One day she made a great feast and invited all the ladies to her house. Toward the close of the banquet, when the fruit and the wine were brought in, an orange and a knife were placed before each lady. While the ladies were eating the oranges, Zuleika ordered Joseph to be brought into the room. The ladies in their astonishment cut their fingers instead of the oranges, for their eyes were fixed upon him, and they were ravished by his beauty.

3. *Joseph in Prison*

Joseph lost favor with Zuleika, and one day she made false accusations against Joseph, and Potiphar put him in prison.

When Joseph had been in prison five years, it happened that the king of Egypt ordered his butler to bring him some wine, and the chief baker to bring some cakes. In the wine set before him he found a fly and in the cakes, chips of wood. Both the chief butler and the chief baker were put

in prison, and Joseph was ordered to wait upon them.

After they had been in prison a full year, both the butler and the baker had dreams on one and the same night. In the morning, when Joseph came to wait upon them, he noticed that they were very sad, and he said to them: "Why are you sad to-day?"

"We had dreams last night, and there is no one to interpret them for us," they answered. "Now pray, go to the captain of the prison and ask him to send to us one of the magicians that he may interpret our dreams."

"Interpretations belong to God," said Joseph, "tell me your dreams, perhaps God will cause me to understand the meaning of them."

"You are nothing but a slave," answered the chief butler in great anger, "and how can you interpret dreams?"

"Did my master ever hear of Chimtom, the very skilled physician?" asked Joseph.

"Of course, I did," answered the chief baker.

"Now, let me tell you a story about this great physician.

"One day, Chimtom saddled his donkey, filled his bags with all sorts of medicine, and set out for foreign lands to learn wisdom from the great men there. On his way, while passing through many villages and towns, he healed the sick free of charge, and he became very much beloved by all.

Once, when about to enter one of the great cities of Canaan, a thief stole Chimtom's clothes and donkey. The great physician was forced to put on a very old and torn suit of clothes, and taking a bag full of medicine with him, he entered the city. Passing through one of the streets, he was attracted by heart-rending cries which came from the inmates of a beautiful palace. On entering he noticed a lad lying sick in bed, and his parents beseeching the three physicians that were called in to save their dear boy from death.

"Chimtom examined the sick lad closely and said to his parents: 'I will cure this boy with the medicine in my bag, if you will only entrust him to my care.' The people and the physicians, on seeing his ragged clothes, mocked him, and the parents would not permit him to come near the patient. They even drove him out of the house in shame.

"The sick boy died, to the great sorrow of his parents, and Chimtom said: 'These people thought I was crazy when I offered to cure their boy. I am now going to tell the people who I am, and I will cure the sick freely.'

"On the following morning he went through the streets of the city and proclaimed: 'I am the great physician Chimtom; whoever has any ailment, let him come to me and I will cure him.' The people thought he was crazy and paid no attention to him. Chimtom then opened his medi-

cine bottles and the people attracted by the wonderful odor of the medicines gathered around him.

"'If you are really the great physician, why are your clothes so ragged?' the people questioned him.

"Chimtom told them what had happened to him. The sick then came to him from all over the city and he cured them freely. His name soon became a blessing to all the inhabitants of the city. The father of the dead boy, on finding out how great a physician the crazy man was, tore his clothes in great anguish and cried bitterly: 'I killed my dear boy, my only boy.'"

When he finished his story, he turned to the chief butler and said: "My lord considers me as a born slave and therefore unfit to interpret dreams. But know you that I am neither a slave nor the son of a slave. My father is a rich and very good man. I was stolen from my father's house and sold as a slave in Egypt. And here too I have done no wrong but I have been put in prison on false accusations."

The chief butler then told his dream to Joseph: "In my dream," he said, "I saw a vine before me. The vine consisted of three branches; and as it sprouted, it brought forth buds, and immediately they ripened into clusters, and became grapes. I took the grapes, squeezed them into Pharaoh's cup, and I gave the cup into the king's hand."

Joseph said to him: "The three branches are

three days; within three days Pharaoh will set you free and restore you to your former office. When you are out of this prison," continued Joseph, "be mindful of me and take me out, too."

At that very moment Joseph heard a heavenly voice saying: "Because thou hast left thy trust in Me, and hast instead reposed it in man, the chief butler shall not think of thee when out of prison, and thou shalt remain imprisoned until it is My desire that thou be set free."

The chief baker, seeing that Joseph had interpreted well, said to Joseph: "In my dream I saw three baskets upon my head, and in the uppermost basket there were delicious sweetmeats made by the confectioner; and the birds came and ate them from the basket upon my head."

Joseph answered: "The three baskets are three days. At the end of the three days, Pharaoh will take away your head from your body, and will hang you upon a gibbet, and the birds will eat the flesh from you."

On the third day, the queen of Egypt gave birth to a son. The king made a great feast to which he invited all the princes and nobles of his kingdom. In the middle of the feast, Pharaoh, by a royal decree, ordered the chief butler to be pardoned and returned to his office, but the chief baker he ordered to be hanged.

Chapter XXIII

JOSEPH THE RULER

1. *Pharaoh's Dreams*

AS willed by God, Joseph was forgotten by the chief butler, because Joseph had put his trust in man, and he was left in prison for two years more. After that length of time Pharaoh dreamt a dream: He was standing by the river Nile when from it came out seven very fat cows. After them seven lean cows came up, and the lean cows swallowed up the fat ones. The king awoke, and when he fell asleep again he dreamt that he saw seven full ears of corn swallowed up by seven lean ears.

Pharaoh was greatly troubled about his dreams, and early in the morning he summoned all the magicians and all the wise men of the land to come before him to interpret his dreams.

"The seven fat cows that you saw," said some of the magicians, "show that you will beget seven daughters, and the seven lean cows swallowing the fat cows means that your seven daughters will die. As for the ears of corn, they signify that you will conquer seven lands, while seven other lands will rebel against you."

"This explanation pleases me not," shouted the king in great fury. "Away with you."

Still another group of magicians and wise men offered the following explanation: "The seven tribes of Canaan will wage war against seven fortified cities of Egypt and will conquer them; then the seven conquered cities will rebel against them and defeat them. As to the dream of the ears, it means that the king will marry seven wives, all of whom will die during his lifetime. Then the fourteen sons of the king will fight with one another and the seven younger ones will prevail over the seven older ones."

"Why, all this is folly!" exclaimed the disappointed king. "Begone, or you shall all suffer the penalty of death."

2. *Joseph Interprets the Dreams*

"May our mighty king live forever," said the chief butler, prostrating himself before Pharaoh; "I must needs remind you of my sins to-day: Once Pharaoh grew angry against the chief baker and myself and put us in prison, and the two of us had dreams on the same night. Together with us in the prison there was a youthful Hebrew, a slave who had been sold for twenty pieces of silver. We told him our dreams on the following morning, and he interpreted them to us. Now it fell out just as he had foretold, the chief baker was hanged by

the king's decree three days after that, and I was restored to my office."

Joseph, at the command of the king, was immediately taken from prison, and after he was shaved and washed and given new clothes, he was ushered into the king's presence.

Pharaoh sat on his throne, wearing a golden crown on his head, and in the crown were set many precious stones. To mount the throne it was necessary to ascend seventy steps. If any one came to speak to the king, he had to stop on the first step. The visitor was then allowed to ascend as many steps as the number of languages he could speak. If, for instance, he knew ten languages, he was permitted to ascend to the tenth step where he sat down. In such a case, the king would descend to the eleventh step, and from there speak to the visitor. When Joseph came before the king, he ascended to the third step and he sat down, for he knew only three languages. Pharaoh then descended to the fourth step, where he too sat down to speak to Joseph.

"I dreamt a dream," said the king to Joseph, "and there is no one in the land to interpret it to me, and I was told that you knew how to interpret dreams."

"Interpretations belong to God," replied Joseph. "Let the king relate his dreams to me, perhaps God will give me wisdom to interpret them."

Pharaoh told Joseph the two dreams he had dreamt, and Joseph said: "God desired to let you know what He is about to do. The seven fat cows and the seven full ears of corn represent seven years of plenty which will be in the land of Egypt, and the seven lean cows and the seven empty ears of corn signify that the years of plenty will be followed by seven years of famine. And the reason the dream was repeated twice is because God will bring this about in the near future. Now let the king look for a wise man and appoint him over the land of Egypt. This man shall gather into storehouses all the food that will remain of the seven years of plenty, and preserve it for the seven years of famine, so that the people of the land may not perish."

"Your words sound wise," said the king, "but how can you prove to me that your interpretation is the true one?"

"As a token that my words are true," answered Joseph, "your wife, the queen, will give birth to a son to-day. If this will fall out as I have said, you will know that my interpretation is the true one." When he was through speaking, he bade the king farewell and departed.

3. *A Holy Letter Is Added to Joseph's Name*

As Joseph had predicted, that very day the queen gave birth to a boy, whereupon Pharaoh summoned his councillors and said: "Can there in

our whole domain be found a man wiser than Joseph? Is there a man in whom the spirit of God is as it is in Joseph? Let Joseph then be appointed for the task he mentioned, and save our land from ruin."

"True, Joseph is very wise and possesses the spirit of God," said some of the councillors, "but it is written in the laws of the land that no man can either be king or viceroy, unless he is able to speak all the seventy languages." And others protested: "How can a slave, sold for twenty pieces of silver, be made a ruler in the mighty land of Egypt?"

"On the morrow, Joseph shall be brought before me, and you will all test his wisdom and convince yourselves whether he is fit to rule in Egypt."

"Go," said God to Gabriel at midnight, "and teach Joseph to speak seventy languages."

"Arise, Joseph," whispered the angel, touching him lightly. Joseph arose and was amazed at the wonderful light reflected from the countenance of the angel. Gabriel then began to teach him the seventy languages, and finding it very difficult, he said to him: "Now behold, I add one holy letter to thy name, so that thou wilt be able to acquire knowledge without any hardship. Thy name shall henceforth be 'Jehoseph.'" No sooner was this extra letter added to Joseph's name than his understanding, grasp, and memory were so strengthened that he was able to learn all the seventy languages

in one lesson and remember them well. The task done, the angel departed, and Joseph again was left alone in his cell.

4. *Joseph Is Made Viceroy of Egypt*

In the morning Joseph was brought before Pharaoh. He ascended all the steps of the throne, for he knew all the seventy languages. When he stood before the king on the seventieth step, he began to talk to him in the Hebrew language. The king understood all seventy languages, but the language spoken by Joseph he did not understand. The king said to Joseph: "What is the name of the language you are speaking now?"

"This is the Hebrew language, which my father and my brothers speak in the land of Canaan," replied Joseph.

Fearing that his servants might depose him when they became aware of the fact that he was unable to speak the Hebrew language, Pharaoh said to Joseph: "Swear to me that you will not disclose it to anybody."

"I do swear that I will not make it known to anybody in your kingdom," said Joseph.

The king immediately summoned all his councillors, and said to them: "Is there anyone who is as wise as Joseph? Is there a man in our great land who possesses the spirit of God as Joseph does? Now," said the king turning to Joseph, "since God made you understand all this, there is

none wiser than you are. You therefore shall have charge of gathering all the food of the seven years of plenty."

Pharaoh removed the ring from his hand, and putting it on Joseph's finger, said: "You are the ruler in Egypt, and without your permission no one is allowed to do anything." The king then made Joseph ride in the royal carriage throughout the land of Egypt, and wherever he came the people received him with great joy.

When the seven years of plenty set in, as Joseph had predicted, he went through the entire land and bought corn. The harvests were good and corn was plentiful, and Joseph bought it at a very low price. He built storehouses all over the country where he laid up the corn for the seven years of famine which were to come.

The seven good years passed, and the seven years of famine commenced. The food, which the inhabitants of Egypt had put aside during the seven years of plenty, had rotted in the storehouses and was unfit for food. Then they all came to Pharaoh and asked him for bread.

"O you fools!" exclaimed the king. "Did not Joseph proclaim to the whole world, that the seven years of plenty would be followed by seven years of famine? Why then did you not save a portion of the plentiful harvests against the need of the future?"

"The grain that we put aside during the good

years has rotted in the storehouses," they replied weepingly.

"Go then to Joseph and buy corn from him," said the king.

Joseph then opened the storehouses and sold corn to the Egyptians.

Chapter XXIV

THE BROTHERS BEFORE JOSEPH

1. *The First Journey to Egypt*

EGYPT was not the only land that suffered from the famine. Phoenicia, Arabia and Palestine also suffered from lack of corn. Old Jacob knew that corn could be gotten in Egypt, and one day he said to his sons: "Go to the land of Egypt to buy corn. But pray, do not all enter the city through one gate, because your numbers may create mistrust, and your heroic and handsome appearance may cause an evil eye to light upon you. You will therefore enter the city of Pharaoh through different gates."

Ten of Jacob's sons departed for the land of Egypt to buy corn. Benjamin, the youngest, did not go with them, because his father refused to let him go lest evil befall him. On the way they thought of their brother Joseph, and they said to one another: "Joseph was carried down to Egypt. Let us search for him, and if we find him, we will ransom him from his master. If his master refuse to sell him, we will use force, though we perish ourselves."

Now Joseph had anticipated that his brothers would have to buy corn in Egypt, and to make sure that they would come in person, he issued an order as follows: "By order of the king and his deputy, he who desires to buy grain in Egypt may not send his slave hither to buy it, but must either do it in person or send his sons for that purpose. Any man who buys grain and sells it to some one else, shall be put to death, for no one may buy more than he requires for the needs of his household. Also, no man is allowed to acquire more grain than one beast of burden can carry, and he who brings two or three beasts of burden, and loads them with grain, shall be put to death."

At the gates of the capital of Egypt Joseph stationed guards and ordered them not to allow any person to enter the city unless he wrote down his own name and the name of his father. He also bade the guards bring him every evening the list of those who had entered the city that day. One evening a guard came and gave Joseph the name of Reuben, son of Jacob; then another guard came and brought in Simon, son of Jacob; a third one handed in the name of Levi, the son of Jacob; and so on to Asher, the tenth son of Jacob. Joseph at once gave orders for every storehouse to be closed with the exception of one. He gave the names of his brothers to the guards of the open storehouse, and said to them: "When these people

arrive, take them prisoners, and bring them before me."

But the brothers, instead of going to buy grain, went to seek Joseph throughout the city. For three days they searched for him everywhere, but he could not be found. The overseer of the open storehouse reported to Joseph that the ten brothers had thus far not yet come to buy corn. Joseph at once sent forth seventy mighty men of valor to make a house-to-house search for them in the city. They found the brothers in one place, and haled them before their master.

With a large crown of gold on his head, and surrounded by his valiant men, Joseph was seated on his throne in his palace. His brothers fell down before him in great admiration. They did not recognize him, because when he was sold by them he was but a youth of seventeen, and now he was a bearded man. But he knew them, for they were all bearded men when he was separated from them.

Joseph made himself strange to his brothers. He took his cup in his hand, knocked against it, and said: "By this magic cup I know that you are spies. You came to the land of Egypt not for the purpose of buying corn, but for the purpose of spying it out and making war aganist it."

"We are no spies," they replied, "for your servants came here from Canaan to buy corn."

"If it be true that you came here to buy corn,"

asked Joseph, "why is it that every one of you entered the city by a different gate?"

"We are the sons of one man in the land of Canaan," they said, "and he bade us not to enter the city by the same gate."

"Of a certainty you are spies," said Joseph. "If you have really come to buy corn, why then have you lingered here for three days without buying anything whatsoever?"

"We are honest men; we are twelve brothers, the sons of one father. The youngest one is with our father in Canaan, and one has disappeared. We are told that some Ishmaelites stole our brother and sold him as a slave in Egypt, and therefore we made search for him throughout the entire city."

"By the life of Pharaoh, you are spies," said Joseph. "If peradventure you should discover your brother serving as a slave, and his master should demand a high sum for his ransom, would you pay it?"

"Of course we would," they all answered.

"But suppose his master should refuse to surrender him for any price in the world, what would you do?"

"If he should refuse to surrender our brother to us at any price, we would kill the master, and carry off our brother," they declared firmly.

"Why speak lies to me?" said Joseph angrily. "By my magic cup I know that two of you attacked

the peaceful city of Shechem and killed all the inhabitants. Now you have come to Egypt to kill the Egyptians for the sake of your brother. I shall be convinced that you are honest men only if you consent to send some of your number home and bring your youngest brother here."

His brothers refused to agree to this, and Joseph accordingly caused them to be put in prison, where they remained for three days. They did not resist imprisonment, for they knew that it had come to them as a punishment from God for having taken no pity on their own brother.

On the third day they were again brought before Joseph, and he said: "I fear God, and therefore I will allow you to return home with food on condition that one of you remain here as hostage, and when you bring your youngest brother with you, you may take the one left as hostage and go."

"I warned you not to sin against our brother," shouted Reuben to his brothers. "Now we receive our just punishment for two wrongs, the wrong against our brother and the wrong against our father."

The brothers of Joseph did not know that the viceroy of Egypt understood their language, because Manasseh, the eldest son of Joseph, acted as interpreter between them.

Joseph decided to keep Simon as hostage, for he, together with his brother Levi, had urged the

other brothers to put Joseph to death. When the brothers consented to leave Simon behind as hostage, Simon said to them: "You desire to do with me as you did with Joseph."

"What can we do?" they replied in despair. "Our households will perish of hunger."

"Do as you please," retorted Simon, "but as for me, let me see the man that will venture to cast me in prison."

Joseph ordered seventy valiant men of Pharaoh's body-guard to cast Simon down and manacle him. But when they approached, Simon uttered such a mighty shout that the seventy men fell backwards on the ground, and their teeth went down their throats. Pharaoh's valiant men and all those that stood around Joseph fled in confusion; only Joseph and his son Manasseh remained calm and unmoved.

"Come," said Joseph to Manasseh, "put a chain around his neck."

Manasseh dealt Simon a blow on the back of his neck, and chained him.

Joseph's brothers were amazed at the strength of the youth, and Simon said to them: "This blow comes not from an Egyptian but from one of the family."

Simon was bound and taken prisoner in the presence of his other brothers; but when they were out of sight, Joseph visited Simon in prison and

treated him with great kindness. He also commanded his servants to serve Simon with the best of food.

Joseph then returned to his nine brothers and said to them: "Now you may go back to your aged father with plenty of food, but remember that you must bring your youngest brother with you. If you do as you are bidden, your brother Simon will be freed."

"We will do as our lord has commanded us," they all replied.

On the way home they stopped at an inn, and when Levi opened his sack to give his camel corn, he exclaimed to his brothers: "Here is the money which I paid the overseer of the storehouse for the corn."

They all trembled greatly and said: "Where, then, is the loving-kindness of God toward our fathers Abraham, Isaac and Jacob? He has delivered us into the hands of the Egyptian king, that he may raise false accusations against us."

And Judah said: "Indeed, we are guilty concerning our brother Joseph, and we have sinned against God, in that we have sold our brother, our own flesh, into slavery. Why then do you ask, 'Where is the loving-kindness of God towards our fathers?' "

"Did I not say to you, 'Do not sin against the lad'? but you would not listen," said Reuben.

"Now the Lord does demand him from us. How then can you say, 'Where is the loving-kindness of God toward our fathers?"

They stayed in the inn over night and in the morning they proceeded on their journey home. Their aged father met them on the way, and he was amazed not to see Simon among them. In reply to his questions, they told him of all that had befallen them in Egypt.

When they opened their sacks and every one of them found the money he had paid for the corn, they were all greatly frightened, and Jacob cried out: "What have you done? I sent Joseph to you to see whether all was well with you, and you said, 'An evil beast has devoured him.' Simon went forth with you to buy corn, and you say, 'The king of Egypt has cast him into prison.' And now you will take Benjamin away and kill him, too. You will bring down my grey hairs with sorrow to the grave."

"Slay my two sons, if I do not bring him back to you," said Reuben to his father.

"Are not your sons as dear to me as my own? Are not your sons equally mine? What will it profit me if I slay your two sons?" asked the sorrow-stricken father.

Reuben made no reply, for he knew that it was unwise for him to have spoken thus to his father. Judah, who was the leader of his brothers, and whose word was law to them, said: "Brothers, do

not insist that our father consent now to send Benjamin with us. A time will come when our bread will give out and our father will then have to consent to let Benjamin go with us."

2. *The Second Journey to Egypt*

The food brought from Egypt was eaten up, and the family of Jacob began to suffer hunger. The little children came to him and said: "Grandfather, pray give us bread so that we may not die from hunger." The aged Jacob was moved by the demand of the little ones, and their words brought tears to his eyes. He called together his sons and said to them: "Go down again to Egypt and buy food."

"But the man warned us not to come back to Egypt unless we bring Benjamin with us," said Judah.

"Wherefore did you deal so ill with me as to tell the man that you had yet a brother?" complained Jacob.

"The man knows everything," replied Judah. "Why, he even knew the very wood of which our baby cribs were made. Pray, father," continued Judah, "send the lad with us, and we will go down to Egypt. If I do not bring him back to you safe and sound, I shall have sinned against you all the days. I shall forfeit my portion in the world to come and I shall bear the blame forever, if I do not fulfill my promise.

Jacob was compelled to let Benjamin go down to Egypt with his other sons. He gave them presents for the ruler of Egypt, and he put into their hands money with which to buy corn, and also the money that was found in their sacks. After all this was done, he said to his sons: "Here is money, here are presents, and here is also your brother Benjamin. Is there anything else that you need?"

"Yes, father," they replied, "we need your blessing and your prayer to God for us."

And Jacob prayed thus: "Thou, O Lord, who at the time of the creation didst set a limit to heaven and earth, and didst say to them 'Enough' when they did stretch themselves further and further, set a limit to my sufferings, too, and say to them 'Enough.' Fill the ruler of Egypt with mercy so that he may restore all my sons to me." The women and children also prayed to God that He redeem their husbands and fathers from the hands of the king of Egypt. And amid prayers and weeping the sons of Jacob once more set out for the land of Egypt.

3. *Joseph Makes Himself Known to Benjamin*

Joseph was overjoyed to learn that Benjamin had come to Egypt with his brothers. He ordered his son Manasseh, who was the steward of his house, to bring the men into the palace, and make ready a meal for them. Standing at the door of

Joseph's house, they said to the steward: "In our country, we supported others, and now we have to depend upon you to support us, and we came to buy food from you. When we came to an inn and opened our sacks of corn, each and every one of us found the money he had paid for the corn in his sack, and we all have brought it back to you."

"Do not worry about the money," said the steward. "I received the money for the corn. The God of your fathers caused you to find a treasure in your sacks."

The steward then brought out Simon to his brothers. Simon told them that he had been treated with great kindness and that he had been released from prison the very moment they had left the city.

At noon Joseph made his appearance, and Judah took Benjamin by his hand and presented him to the viceroy, while they all bowed down to the earth. Joseph placed his hands on Benjamin's head and said: "God be gracious to you, my son."

"How is your old father, is he well?" inquired Joseph.

"Your servant, our father, is well," they replied.

Joseph was so moved at the sight of Benjamin that he withdrew to his own chamber and wept. When he came back, he ordered three tables to be set, one for himself, one for his

brothers, and one for the Egyptians. He then took his cup, raised it, and said: "By this magic cup I know that Judah is king, therefore let him sit at the head of the table, and let Reuben the firstborn take the second seat at Judah's right." He then seated the brothers who were of the same mother together, and when he reached Benjamin he said: "I know that the youngest of you has no mother, and I too have none, therefore he may take his place next to me."

The brothers were greatly astonished at the viceroy's wisdom. When they were all seated and feasted, Joseph said to Benjamin: "Have you a brother born by your own mother?"

"I had one, whose name was Joseph; but I do not know what has become of him," answered Benjamin.

"Have you a wife?" asked Joseph again.

"Yes, I have a wife and ten sons," replied Benjamin.

At night, when everybody was asleep, Joseph ordered Benjamin to be brought to his private chamber.

"Now," said Joseph to Benjamin upon entering the room; "I was told that the Hebrews are all wise, but are you acquainted with any of the wisdoms?"

"Your servant is well versed in all the wisdom my father has taught me," replied Benjamin.

"Now then," said Joseph, "look at this wonderful drawing, and tell me where Joseph, your lost brother, can be found."

Benjamin looked upon the wonderful map, examined it closely, and to his great surprise he discovered that he who sat next to him was his lost brother.

Joseph, noticing Benjamin's amazement, asked: "What have you seen there?"

"I can see by this that my brother Joseph is sitting here before me," replied Benjamin.

"I am your lost brother!" exclaimed Joseph. They embraced one another and wept for great joy. "Now," continued Joseph, "do not tell it to our brothers, but wait until I myself make it known to them. I will send you with them when they go away to-morrow, but I will order them to be brought back to me, and I will take you away from them. If they risk their lives and fight for you, I will make myself known to them. But if they forsake you, I will keep you, and I will not make myself known to them."

Joseph ordered his steward to fill the men's sacks with corn, to return each man's money in his sack, and to put his magic cup into Benjamin's sack.

On the morrow, as soon as it was light, Joseph dismissed his brothers with kind words, and they started on their homeward journey.

4. *The Thief*

They were not very far from the city gates, when Joseph told his son Manasseh, the steward of his house, to run after them, and look for the silver cup which he had hidden in Benjamin's sack.

The steward overtook the eleven brothers and called out to them to halt. "Why have you stolen my master's magic cup?" he asked on approaching them.

The brothers were greatly alarmed upon hearing this accusation, and said: "With whomsoever the cup is found, let him die, and we will become slaves to our master."

"I will not be so hard," said the steward; "he with whom the cup is found shall be the slave, and the rest of you shall be blameless."

He began to search for the cup; he commenced with Reuben, the eldest, and finished with Benjamin, the youngest, in whose sack the silver cup was found.

In their fury the brothers rent their clothes, and shouted at Benjamin: "Oh, you thief and son of a thief! Your mother brought shame upon our father by stealing the images of our grandfather Laban, and now you bring shame upon us by stealing a cup."

The brothers returned to the city, and were brought before Joseph.

"Why have you stolen my magic cup? I know well, you took it in order to find out with its help where your lost brother is. Now, the youth who stole my cup shall remain with me as a slave, but as for you, you may return in peace to your father."

5. *Judah Pleads*

Joseph carried off Benjamin by force, and locked him up in a chamber. But Judah broke the door open, and, entering the chamber with his brothers, said to Joseph: "Permit me to speak a few words to you."

"You may speak," said Joseph.

"You are doing us a great wrong," said Judah. "We came here to buy corn, and you accused us of being spies. You then inquired about our family, and we told you that we had an old father and a younger brother. You took away Simon from us, and warned us not to return to Egypt unless Benjamin be with us. Now, you are like Pharaoh in that you make a promise and keep it not. You said: 'Bring your youngest brother to me, that I may look at him.' Do you call this looking at him? If you desire to have a slave, pray keep me in his stead, for I am braver and stronger than he is. Your servant, our father, is very fond of the lad, and has found consolation in him since his wife Rachel and his son Joseph died. How then can I come to your servant, our father, when the lad is not with us?"

At that moment a voice came down from heaven and said: "Because Joseph heard his brother Judah say ten times, 'Your servant our father,' and he remained indifferent when he thus heard his father being humiliated, I shall take away ten of his allotted years, and his days shall be only one hundred and ten years."

When Judah saw that Joseph remained unmoved by his plea, he said: "For the sake of one woman two of us destroyed the mighty city of Shechem. If your life is dear to you, return Benjamin to us and let us go."

Joseph still remaining obstinate, Judah uttered his lion-like cry. The shout was so terrific that Joseph's valiant men lost their teeth, and the cities of Pithom and Rameses were destroyed. Judah's rage began to manifest itself; he took iron rods, ground them between his teeth and spat them out as fine powder. He then shouted furiously: "If you do not return Benjamin to us, I shall draw my sword out of its sheath."

"If you draw your sword out, I shall use it on your neck," answered Joseph.

"But we have not come here for the sake of making war against you and destroying Egypt," pleaded Judah again; "return Benjamin to us and let us go. How can I go up to my father when the lad is not with us? What can I say to him?"

"Say to your father, 'The rope has followed after the water bucket,'" said Joseph.

"I hate falsehood!" exclaimed Judah.

"He who sold his own brother for twenty pieces of silver, and reported the shameful lie to his father, 'An evil beast has devoured him,' should not now abstain from telling a falsehood," laughed Joseph.

Judah became very angry and said: "Return Benjamin to us, or I shall dye the entire land of Egypt with blood."

"Oh, yes, you and your brothers are famous dyers," said Joseph; "you dyed the city of Shechem with blood, and also the coat of your brother you dyed with blood and brought it to your father and said: 'An evil beast has devoured him.' "

And Judah's rage again began to manifest itself: his right eye shed tears of blood, and the hair above his heart grew so stiff that it pierced and rent the five garments in which he was clothed. When Joseph observed this, he made a sign to Manasseh, who thereupon stamped on the ground so forcibly that the whole palace shook. Judah beholding this said: "Only one belonging to our family can stamp thus!" And he again began to speak softly to Joseph: "Pray give us our brother and let us return him to our father."

"I have already decreed that the thief must remain with me as a slave," said Joseph firmly, and, to show his own wonderful strength, he pushed his foot against the marble pedestal upon which he sat, and it broke into splinters.

"This one is a great hero!" exclaimed Judah, and he tried to draw his sword from its scabbard to kill Joseph, but he was not able to do so, because the weapon could not be moved from its sheath. Then he said to his brothers: "This man is as God-fearing as we are."

"Why do you speak so much, while your older brothers, Reuben, Simon and Levi stand by silent?" asked Joseph.

"I alone was surety to my father for Benjamin, saying: 'If I do not bring him back to you, let me bear the blame forever, in this world and in the world to come,' " replied Judah.

"Why did you not stand by your other brother when he was sold for twenty pieces of silver? You then disregarded the great grief of your father, but dipped his coat in blood, sent it to your father and said: 'This coat have we found.' Joseph had done no evil, while this Benjamin is a thief. Go then to your father and say to him: 'This son, too, was devoured by a wild beast.' "

Judah uttered a wild cry which caused all the city walls to fall in ruins, the faces of Pharaoh's valiant men to become bleached and disfigured, and Pharaoh and Joseph to be flung from their thrones. All of Judah's brothers, who kept quiet until now, also fell into a rage, and stamped upon the ground until it became full of furrows.

"Go forth, Naphtali," commanded Judah, "and count all the streets of the city."

The swift messenger soon returned and reported that there were twelve streets in the city.

"Now, brothers, be brave, behave yourselves like men, and let us destroy the whole city," said Judah. "I will take upon myself to destroy three streets, and each and every one of you one street, and thus we shall destroy Egypt's proud city as we destroyed Shechem."

When Pharaoh learned the cause of the terrible uproar, he advised Joseph to grant the Hebrews their demand.

Chapter XXV

THE LOST SON RESTORED

1. *Joseph Makes Himself Known*

JOSEPH resolved to make himself known to his brothers, for he saw that they were on the point of destroying the land of Egypt, and he began to speak gently to Judah and his brothers: "You say that one of your brothers was lost and is dead. He is not. I shall call him and he will come forward." And he began to call: "Joseph, son of Jacob, come hither! Joseph, son of Jacob, come hither!"

The brothers looked around and could see no one come. "Why do you look here and there?" said Joseph. "I am your brother Joseph whom you sold as a slave. Now, brothers, do not be grieved that you sold me here, for God sent me here to preserve many lives."

The brothers would not believe him, but Joseph at last convinced them that he was their brother. They then drew close to him, and he, weeping, embraced and kissed them all in turn.

Pharaoh was greatly pleased to learn that the great heroes, who but a short while ago had threatened the destruction of the entire city, were

the brothers of his beloved viceroy, and he sent his servants to Joseph that they take part in his joy. He also sent word to Joseph that it would please him well if his brothers should come to live in Egypt, and he promised to give them the best part of the land for their dwelling-place.

Joseph gave all his brothers new clothes, embroidered with gold and silver, and ten wagons to bring over their families, and for his father he sent the very same wagon in which he had ridden when he first became viceroy in Egypt. For each and every one of his brothers' children he sent beautiful raiment and one hundred pieces of silver, and for the wives of his brothers he sent royal garments, such as were worn by the queen of Egypt. To his sister Dinah he sent silver and gold embroidered gowns and many precious gifts.

Joseph accompanied his brothers, and when he took leave of them, he said: "Go to Canaan and tell my father of all my glory in Egypt, and take him and your wives and children and come hither. Do not quarrel on the way as to who is to blame for having caused me to be sold as a slave, and take heed not to inform our father suddenly of the good news."

2. *Jacob Receives the Good News*

With merry hearts the brothers now journeyed from Egypt to Canaan. When they reached the boundary of Canaan, they said to one another:

"How can we inform our father that Joseph is still alive? Such glad news may frighten him, and besides he may not believe us."

On drawing near to their homes, they beheld Serah, the daughter of Asher, coming out to meet them. Serah was a very wise and beautiful maiden and was skilled in playing the harp. The brothers now thought of a good plan. They gave Serah a harp, and said to her: "Go and play before your grandfather Jacob, and sing the following words: "Joseph, my uncle, lives! Joseph, my uncle, lives! He is not dead. He is the ruler over the whole land of Egypt."

Serah took the harp and hurried towards Jacob's tent. On entering she said: "Peace be with you, dear grandfather."

"May peace be with you forever," came the reply.

She then sat down in front of Jacob, and with a very sweet melodious voice she sang the following words, accompanying herself upon the harp: "Joseph, my uncle, lives! Joseph, my uncle, lives! He is not dead! He is the ruler over the whole land of Egypt." She repeated these words several times, and her sweet music brought cheer and comfort to Jacob's sad heart.

"Continue singing these very delightful words, my child," said Jacob to Serah. She repeated the song again and again, and Jacob grew more and more cheerful. He then approached Serah, and

putting his hands on her head, said: "May death never have power over you, for you have revived my spirit." And so it was. Serah did not die, she entered Paradise alive.

While Jacob was thus speaking to Serah, his sons appeared, clothed in their beautiful clothes, and having with them all the beautiful presents Joseph had given them. "Glad news!" they all exclaimed upon seeing their father; "Joseph lives. He is the ruler over the land of Egypt, and he sends you a message of joy."

"I cannot believe such things," said the astonished Jacob.

"Look at the presents he sent," they said, pointing to the beautiful wagons and other things of magnificence.

When the aged Jacob saw all this, he no longer doubted the good news, and he praised the Lord God in heaven for His loving-kindness. God appeared to him and said: "Jacob, Jacob, fear not to go down to Egypt, for I shall be with thee even there. I will make a great nation out of thee, and I will deliver it from Egyptian bondage."

Encouraged by God's promise, Jacob and his family set out for the land of Egypt. He sent Judah ahead to build a dwelling for him, and also schools where he could at once start to instruct his children in the law of God. Joseph was greatly pleased to hear from Judah that their father was nearing Egypt. "Now," said Joseph

to himself: "the Egyptians will no longer say that a slave rules over Egypt. When they see my father and my brothers they will be convinced that I was a freeborn man, of noble stock."

3. *Jacob in Egypt*

Joseph made ready his chariot with his own hands, without waiting for his servants to help him. When the nobles of Egypt saw Joseph making preparations to meet his father, they did the same. Joseph and the nobles were followed by countless men marching to the sound of all sorts of musical instruments. Even the women of Egypt ascended the roofs of the houses and the walls of the city in order to greet Jacob.

Joseph, wearing the royal crown upon his head, rode in his chariot ahead of the procession. When he noticed the chariot in which his father rode, he descended from his chariot and walked the rest of the way on foot. Upon coming close to his father, he bowed down to the earth, and all the people with him also prostrated themselves. Then Joseph fell upon his father's neck and wept bitterly.

Joseph then took some of his brothers and presented them to Pharaoh. He chose the weakest of them, so that the king might not be tempted to keep them in his service as warriors. He introduced them as shepherds, and as the Egyptians, who worshiped the ram, kept aloof from shep-

herds, Pharaoh gave them the pasture land of Goshen for their dwelling.

Joseph then presented his father to Pharaoh. Now the entrance which led to the palace was purposely made very low, so that all who enter would have to bow to the idol placed opposite the door. When Jacob was about to enter the palace, an angel came down and raised the upper door-post so that the pious Jacob might not be forced to bow before an idol. When the king saw that, he could not believe his own eyes. He thought that Abraham was standing before him, because many years ago, when Abraham was about to enter the palace, the upper door-post of the entrance was likewise raised for his sake.

"How old are you?" asked the amazed king.

"I am one hundred and thirty years old," answered Jacob.

Pharaoh then knew that a descendant of Abraham was before him, and not Abraham himself.

On leaving the palace, Jacob blessed the king and said: "May the Nile always overflow its banks and water the fields of the land."

4. *Jacob's Last Wish*

For seventeen years Jacob and his family lived happily in the land of Goshen. When Jacob felt his end approaching, he called Joseph to his bedside and said to him: "When I die, bury me not in the land of Egypt, but bury me in the Cave of

Machpelah in the land of Canaan, together with my fathers Abraham and Isaac. I know," continued Jacob, "that Egypt will some day be smitten with the plague of vermin, and I do not desire that my corpse be exposed to such uncleanliness. I likewise fear that, if I am buried in Egypt, the Egyptians, among whom I am considered a saint, may come and worship my grave even as they worship an idol."

Joseph swore to his father that he would fulfill his wish and carry him out of the land of Egypt, and added: "As you command me to do, so will I beg my brothers, on my death-bed, to fulfill my last wish and carry my body from Egypt to Canaan."

Now Jacob desired to bless the two sons of Joseph, Manasseh and Ephraim, but with his prophetic eye he foresaw Jeroboam the descendant of Ephraim, and Jehu the descendant of Manasseh, and how they would seduce Israel to worship idols. As he was about to lay his hands upon the heads of his grandsons, the divine spirit forsook him.

"I cannot bless your children, my son," said Jacob to Joseph, "for their descendants Jeroboam and Jehu will cause my descendants to worship idols."

Disappointed by his father's refusal, Joseph prayed to God that He restore the prophetic spirit to his father so that his children might be blessed.

God listened to his prayers, and Joseph put his sons before his father in such wise that Manasseh should stand opposite Jacob's right hand, and Ephraim opposite his left hand.

Jacob, however, put his right hand on Ephraim's head, and turning to Joseph he said: "I know that Manasseh shall become great, for from him Gideon the judge will descend. But his younger brother will be the ancestor of Joshua, who will bring the sun and the moon to a standstill." He then blessed the lads and prayed that they might become the ancestors of two great tribes, and that God might shield them from evil.

5. *The Death of Jacob*

After Jacob had blessed each of his sons separately, God took his soul with a kiss. All the sons of Jacob rent their garments, threw themselves upon the ground and wept bitterly. All the princes and lords of the land of Egypt, on hearing of Jacob's death, came to mourn over him. Thus they all mourned over him for seventy days.

When the days of mourning were over, Joseph went to Pharaoh to obtain from him permission to carry his father's ashes from Egypt to Canaan.

"No, you cannot remove your father's ashes from this land," said Pharaoh.

"But I swore to him before he died," replied Joseph, "that I would carry his remains to Canaan."

"You must then disregard your oath," insisted the king.

"Oh," said Joseph, "if I am permitted to disregard an oath, then I will also disregard the oath I took for your sake, and disclose it to all your servants, that you are not able to speak Hebrew."

"An oath is holy, you must not disregard it," said the embarrassed king, "so proceed to the land of Canaan and bury your father there."

Joseph then ordered his father's body to be placed in a bier of ivory covered with gold and studded with precious gems. The bier was borne by the sons of Jacob. In front of them marched the valiant men of Pharaoh and the heroes of Joseph, all girded with swords and clothed in coats of mail. Behind the bier marched the princes of Egypt, followed by all the inhabitants of the land.

The kings and the inhabitants of Canaan, on learning the cause of the great procession through their lands, also joined in the march.

When the sons of Jacob were about to lower the body of their father into the Cave of Machpelah, Esau said to them: "You have no right to take away my grave. In this cave there is room for four pairs. Since Adam and Eve, Abraham and Sarah, Isaac and Rebekah were buried here, there remained only two more graves, one for my brother Jacob and the other one for myself. But my brother gave his grave away to his wife Leah;

therefore this last grave belongs to me and not to him."

"But you sold your share in the cave to our father long ago," argued Joseph, "and we have a bill of sale for that in Egypt."

"Let this document be produced," said Esau, "and I shall withdraw my claim."

The sons of Jacob sent Naphtali, the fleet runner, back to Egypt to bring the bill of sale. Meantime, Hushim, the son of Dan, who was deaf and did not know the cause of the delay, inquired why his grandfather lay unburied. He was told: "That hairy man has caused all this delay." He became indignant, seized a club, and with one mighty blow killed his uncle Esau. Jacob was then buried in the Cave of Machpelah, in accordance with his own wish.

6. *Joseph Unrevengeful*

On his return to Egypt from Canaan, Joseph passed the pit into which his brothers had once cast him, and looked into it very thoughtfully. He then raised his eyes heavenward and praised the Almighty God for his kindness.

"Now," said the brothers to one another, "since our father is no more, Joseph will hate us and he will perhaps wreak vengeance upon us." They therefore sent Bilhah to Joseph with the message: "Thus has our father commanded before his death, 'Forgive the sin of your brothers.' "

Grieved by his brothers' suspicion, Joseph called them together and said: "You are to be like the stars of heaven. If ten stars were unable to harm one star, how then can one star harm ten? Be of good cheer and put your trust in God."

Not only did Joseph act kindly towards his own brothers, but with the Egyptians as well. He was always ready to give them aid and counsel, and he therefore was beloved of all.

When Joseph was seventy-one years old, Pharaoh, the king of Egypt, died. The king's last wish was that Joseph might be a father to Pharaoh's youthful son Magron, who was to be the successor to the throne. Joseph then ruled thirty-nine more years in the land of Egypt as Magron's viceroy, and the longer he ruled the more beloved and respected he was not only by the Egyptians, but also by the inhabitants of many other lands.

7. *The Death of Joseph*

On his death-bed Joseph called together all his brothers and said to them: "I am about to die, and I desire that you carry my bones out of this land into the promised land, when God will visit you and take you out of the land of Egypt."

When his brothers swore to fulfill his wish and bury his bones in Palestine, Joseph stretched out his feet, and died at the age of one hundred and

Joseph's coffin was sunk by the magicians in the Nile

ten years. All Israel mourned for him and the whole of Egypt was in great grief.

The magicians of Egypt came to Pharaoh and said to him: "Know you, that the people of Israel could not leave Egypt without the corpse of Joseph. Now, therefore, let Joseph's coffin be placed somewhere where no one can lay hand on it."

"What is your counsel then?" asked the king.

"Let Joseph's corpse be placed in a tightly sealed leaden coffin, and we, with our secret arts, will let it down into the river Nile whence no human being will be able to remove it."

By the order of the king Joseph was accordingly put into a leaden coffin, closely sealed on all sides, which was sunk by the magicians somewhere in the Nile.

Upon the death of Joseph, the Egyptians pillaged his house, and in the booty taken by them was a wonderful rod which they brought to the king's palace. This was the rod that God had created in the twilight of the first Sabbath Eve and given to Adam. From Adam it descended to Enoch, then to Noah, then to Shem, and Abraham, and Isaac, and finally to Jacob who brought it to Egypt and gave it to Joseph.

Chapter XXVI

JOB

1. *Job's Wealth and Righteousness*

N those days there lived a man in the land of Uz, whose name was Job. He was a very pious man, and he was one of the few who deserved the honor of being called "the servant of God." God was very gracious to Job, and gave him great wealth. His sheep were never harmed by wild beasts; on the contrary, they would kill the wolves that tried to attack them. He had no less than one hundred and thirty thousand sheep, and he required eight hundred dogs to keep guard over them. He had three hundred and forty thousand asses, and thirty-five hundred pair of oxen.

Job did not use all this wealth for his own pleasure, but considered the good of the people. He provided the poor and the needy with clothes, with food, and with all other necessities. His house was equipped with doors on all sides, so that the wayfarer might enter, no matter from what direction he came. But most of all he concerned himself about the welfare of widows and orphans.

One day one of the poor people of the town died, and Job, as was his custom, set out for the house of the widow and orphans to comfort them and to provide for their needs. On the way he was met by Satan, who appeared to him in the guise of one of his friends.

"I was told that you were on the way to visit the house of the poor widow," said Satan, "and I came to prevent you from doing it. For is it proper for you, as judge and wealthiest man, to lower yourself by visiting the house of the poorest widow in town? I, as a friend of yours, am concerned about your dignity, and ask you to refrain from doing it."

"You may be one of my friends," replied Job, "but you are talking vain words. Am I then more dignified than God Himself, who cares for the orphan and the widow, and comforts the mourner?"

Job then went to the house of the poor widow, and comforted her and the little orphans with kindly words. Upon inquiry he learned from the neighbors of the widow that she was very poor, and all that her dead husband had left her was a small field which did not produce enough to support her and her little children.

"I must provide for this poor widow and her brood until the children grow up and are able to take care of themselves," thought the benevolent Job. He went to the house of the poor widow, and

said: "When you till the soil, or do any work in the field, you may make use of my asses, and you may call on my servants to do your work, for my house is open to you."

"May the Lord bless you for your kindness," said the widow, "but God forbid that I take aught from the hands of a stranger. I shall support my little orphans and myself with whatever I can earn with my ten fingers."

Thereafter the widow sold her household goods and bought for herself an ass with which she worked every day in her small field. But the soil did not produce enough to support the poor family, and the widow and her little children suffered the pangs of hunger. Job learned of her misery and offered to give her enough food to last her and her children the whole year, but she refused to accept the offer.

"How can I help this poor woman?" asked Job of himself. He thought and thought, and finally he hit upon a plan. He let it be known throughout the town that the widow was closely related to his own family. The news spread rapidly, and there was many a man in the town who offered to marry the woman, as it would be a great honor indeed to become a member of Job's family. The widow was married at last to one of the rich widowers in the town, and she and her little orphans lived happily together under his roof.

2. *Satan Accuses Job*

Near the house of Job there had been erected an idol which the people worshiped. One day Job asked himself: "Is it likely that this idol is the creator of heaven and earth? I wonder how I can find out the truth about it!" On the following night he heard a voice calling: "Job! Job! Arise, and I will tell thee who is the Creator of heaven and earth. The one near thy house and to whom people offer sacrifices is not God. It is the work of Satan, the tempter, who thus deceives men."

"If this idol is the work of the tempter," said Job, "then grant me permission to destroy it."

"I am an archangel of God," the voice continued to speak. "If thou destroyest this idol, thou wilt bring upon thyself the enmity of Satan, and great suffering with it. But if thou remainest faithful through thy suffering, God will change thy sorrows into joys, and thy name will become famous throughout all the coming generations of mankind."

"For the sake of God, I am ready to endure all suffering," said Job. And Job, accompanied by fifty men, destroyed the idol.

Job knew that Satan would try to approach him. He therefore ordered his guard to permit no one to enter, and then withdrew to his chamber.

And so it was. Satan, in the guise of a beggar, appeared before the guard, and said: "Pray permit me to enter, so that I may speak to thy master."

"Thou canst not enter," said the guard, "for such are my master's orders."

"Then pray," pleaded the beggar, "ask thy master to let me have a morsel of bread."

When the guard told Job of what had occurred, Job knew that it was the Tempter that was standing before the gate, and he said to the guard: "Here is a piece of burnt bread for the beggar, but say to him, 'Do not expect tc eat of my bread, for it is prohibited to thee.' "

The guard was ashamed to give a beggar burnt bread, and he substituted a good piece for it, and offered it to the beggar. "Now, be honest with thy master," said the beggar, "and execute his errand."

The guard thereupon fetched the burnt bread and handed it to Satan, repeating the words of Job: "Do not expect to eat of my bread, for it is prohibited to thee."

"Go and tell thy master," said Satan, "that as the bread is burnt, so will I disfigure his body."

Presently Satan appeared before the throne of Divine Majesty, and God said to him: "Whence comest thou?"

"I have gone to and fro on the earth," replied Satan, "and have walked up and down in it, and I have seen no man as pious as Thy servant Abra-

ham. Thou didst promise him the whole land of Canaan, yet he had not so much as a burial place for Sarah, but he did not complain or doubt Thy promise. As for Job, true, there is no one on earth that loves Thee as he does, but if Thou wilt put him to the test and deliver him into my hand, I shall succeed in making him doubt Thy righteousness."

God thereupon gave Satan full permission to test Job, with this exception, that he was not to harm his person.

3. *Job's Suffering*

Now Satan set about his work. One day one of Job's servants arrived at his home all bruised and wounded, and reported to Job: "The Queen of Sheba has attacked our men, killed them all, and has taken possession of our oxen and asses. I alone escaped." This wounded slave had only enough life left in him to come and tell Job the tale of his losses. After he delivered his message, the servant fell dead.

Immediately thereafter, another one of Job's servants entered and reported: "A fire has descended from heaven and in an instant consumed your shepherds and your sheep, and I alone am left." This servant, too, fell dead as soon as he had finished telling Job the tale of his losses.

Satan, in the guise of the king of Persia, besieged the city where Job had once lived, and

when he had captured it, he spoke thus to the inhabitants: "Job has accumulated all the wealth in the world, and has left nothing for others. He has also torn down the temple of God. Now we can repay him for his evil deeds. Come with me and we shall together pillage his house."

The inhabitants replied: "The sons and daughters of Job might rise up against us later, and avenge their father's wrongs. We are afraid to join you in pillaging his house."

Satan then pulled down the house in which the children of Job had assembled. When the inhabitants saw that the children of Job lay dead in ruins, they pillaged the house of Job, their former benefactor.

In spite of all his misfortunes, Job remained steadfast in his faith in God. Satan saw that the pious heart of Job could not be changed by such methods and he again appeared before God, and said: "Verily, a man would give up anything he possesses to save his life. But put Job himself, his very person, into my hands, and Thou wilt see that he will not remain in his piety."

"Very well," said God, "I give thee power over the body of Job, but his soul thou canst not touch."

Satan was in a predicament. He was in the position of the slave who was ordered by his master to break the pitcher but not to spill the contents thereof. Satan smote the body of Job with leprousy, from the soles of his feet to the crown of

his head. This plague forced Job to leave the city, and sit down outside upon an ash-heap. His wife, seeing his terrible torture and fearing that he would not remain pious any longer, said to him: "Pray for your death."

Job replied: "If in the days of good fortune, when men often dismiss God, I stood firm and did not rebel against Him, surely I shall be able to remain steadfast under misfortune, when men seek God."

The plight of the wife of Job was very sad indeed. She hired herself out as water-carrier to earn her daily bread, but when her master learned that she shared her bread with her husband, he dismissed her. She then cut off her hair, and purchased bread with it, in order to keep her husband from starving. The bread merchant who had taken the hair in lieu of the bread, was none other than Satan himself. "Ah," said he, "if thou hadst not deserved such great misery, it would not have come upon thee."

Satan's remark was more than the unfortunate woman could bear. She came to her husband, and amid tears and moans urged him: "Renounce God and die."

"I know that Satan has induced you to speak thus," replied Job; then addressing himself to the Tempter, he said: "Thou wretch! Why dost not thou meet me frankly? Give up thy underhand ways!"

Satan appeared before Job. "I am vanquished indeed," he said, and went away abashed.

4. *The Friends of Job*

Job had three friends who lived in distant countries, each one many miles away from the other. Now each of the four friends had planted three special trees in his garden, one for each of his friends, and upon each tree was carved the name of the friend for whose sake it was planted. The friends took personal care of these trees, in spite of the fact that they were kings in the countries in which they lived. They would water the trees daily, and took exceedingly good care of them so that they grew to great heights.

One day, as each of the three friends of Job went into his garden to water the trees, each of them noticed to his amazement that the tree planted for Job no longer had green, lustrous leaves on it. The tree had withered and its leaves had turned yellow and sere. And each one of the friends said: "Surely some misfortune must have befallen my friend. I must set out at once and see if I can be of any help to him."

The three friends arrived at the same time in the city where Job dwelt, and they inquired of the inhabitants after the whereabouts of Job. The inhabitants took them outside the gates, and pointing to a figure sitting upon an ash-heap, said: "Yonder is your friend Job." When they came

closer to the figure and recognized it as that of their friend Job, they broke out into lamentations and shed bitter tears.

For seven days the three friends sat on the ground with him in silence, and then Job opened his mouth and cursed the day in which he was born. One of the three friends, Eliphaz, answered Job and said: "You were wont to comfort the unfortunate, and now when misfortune befalls you, you are not able to bear it without grumbling."

"But I am convinced that I was just and upright, and I did not deserve this suffering," protested Job. "God has made an error," continued Job, "and He has imposed suffering upon me that was intended for a sinner. He has mistakenly inflicted punishment upon Eyob (Job), that was meant for Oyeb (enemy)."

5. *God Speaks*

Thereupon God spoke to Job and said: "Many hairs have I created upon the head of man, yet each hair has its own sac. Were two hairs to draw their nourishment from the same sac, man would lose the sight of his eyes. It has never happened that I should misplace a sac. Is it likely, then, that I have mistaken Job for another?

"I allow many drops of rain to descend from the heavens and for each drop there is a mould in the clouds. Were two drops to issue from the same mould, the ground would be made miry so

that it would not be able to bring forth any growth. It has never happened that I should misplace a mould in the clouds. Is it likely, then, that I have mistaken Job for another?

"I hurl many thunderbolts from the skies, and each one comes along its own path. Were two thunderbolts to proceed along the same path, they would destroy the whole world. It has never happened that I should misplace a path. Is it likely, then, that I have mistaken Job for another?

"The gazelle gives birth to her young on the highest point of a cliff. The young would fall into the abyss and be crushed to death, if I did not send an eagle there to catch it up and carry it for its mother. Were the eagle to appear a second earlier or later than the appointed time, the little gazelle would perish. It has never happened that I should miss the exact second. Is it likely, then, that I have mistaken Job for another?"

"Why, then, was I punished thus?" asked Job. "Am I not better than Adam, the creation of Thy own hand, who permitted himself to be enticed by his wife and to eat from the tree of knowledge? As for me, I rebuked my wife when she urged me to renounce Thee that I might die."

God replied: "On account of a single transgression committed by Adam, I decreed death for him and all his descendants. And yet Adam did not murmur. But thou art complaining."

After a long dispute between Job and his friends, the latter came to the conclusion that Job was sinful and that he merited the punishment God had inflicted upon him. The Lord then appeared to them and said: "Ye have committed a sin, for ye did not speak the truth concerning My servant Job. Rise up and let him bring a sin-offering for you. Only for his sake do I refrain from destroying you."

After seven years of suffering, Job was restored to health, and his wealth increased to double the substance he had owned before misfortune overtook him. His wife Zitidos died during the seven years of his trials, and now he married a second wife, Dinah, and she bore him seven sons and three daughters.

Job lived happily for many more years, and when he felt that his end was approaching, he gathered his children and grandchildren around him, and told them the tale of his days. Having finished the story, he said to them: "I am about to die, and you will take my place. Forsake not the Lord, be generous toward the poor, and treat the weak with kindness."

Chapter XXVII

THE EGYPTIAN BONDAGE

1. *The Beginning of the Bondage*

WHILE the brothers of Joseph were alive the Egyptians remained friendly toward the Israelites. But when the last of the brothers died, the suffering of the children of Jacob began.

The Israelites had increased in numbers. At the time of Jacob's arrival in Egypt, there were but seventy persons in the entire Jewish family, but now their numbers had grown to six hundred thousand. Their physical strength and heroism were also extraordinary. The Egyptians therefore became alarmed at the great numbers of Israelites and were filled with fear and envy. The first hostile act on the part of the Egyptians was to take away from the Israelites all fields and vineyards which Joseph had given them.

Shortly after the death of Levi, Magron, the Egyptian king who had been brought up by Joseph, died, and his son Malol ascended the throne. All the princes and elders who remembered Joseph and all the good he had done for Egypt, also died. A new generation arose who

knew not the sons of Jacob and therefore did not hesitate to oppress the Israelites.

Once Malol waged war against Zepho, the grandson of Esau. The Israelites fought on the side of the Egyptians, and through their heroism saved the Egyptians from certain defeat. The Egyptians, instead of being grateful to the Israelites for their loyalty, became more envious of them, and feared that some day the Israelites might use their wonderful strength against them.

2. *Pharaoh's Cunning*

The councillors and elders of Egypt came to Malol, who was named Pharaoh by the Egyptians, and said to him: "Behold, the children of Israel are numerous and mighty. Now then give us counsel and tell us how to get rid of them and gradually destroy them, lest they become too numerous in the land, join our enemies in time of war, and destroy us."

"This is my advice," said the king. "The cities of Pithom and Rameses (Tanis and Heliopolis) are not fortified, and we must have them strong enough to withstand the attack of the foe. Let a royal decree therefore go forth over all the lands of Egypt and Goshen that all the inhabitants, both Egyptians and Hebrews, must help build fortifications." Pharaoh himself set an example to all the people. He took trowel and basket in hand, and put a brick mould on his neck. The people

were then urged by the overseers, who had been appointed by Pharaoh, to follow the king's example. "See how the king works," they said. "Will you not imitate his activity?"

Thus the Israelites went to work, and laid the moulds upon their necks, little suspecting the guile that was in the heart of the king and his councillors.

At the close of the first day, the Hebrews had made a large number of bricks. "Now," said Pharaoh to the overseers, "this number of bricks must be imposed upon the Israelites as the amount of their daily task."

For a month the Egyptians worked together with the Hebrews; then the Egyptian workmen were gradually withdrawn from the work; but as yet the Hebrews were paid the regular wage.

When a year and four months elapsed, not an Egyptian was to be seen making bricks or building, but the Hebrews were kept at their work, and finally were given no wage for it.

When the walls around Pithom and Rameses were completed, the Israelites were employed to strengthen the fortifications of all the other cities of Egypt and to dig canals for the Nile. They were also employed to dig and plough the fields, to prune fruit-trees, and to do all sorts of menial work in the house and in the field.

Very harsh and cruel men were set over them as taskmasters and overseers, and if one of the Israel-

ites asked for his wages, or fainted under his burden, he was beaten or put in the stocks. They were kept at work from early dawn till late at night, they were not permitted to go home at night but were forced to sleep in the open air, upon the bare ground.

In spite of all the attempts made by the Egyptians to crush the spirit of the unfortunate people and to diminish their numbers, they were sustained by the hope in God. For they heard a voice from heaven, saying: "I promised their father Abraham that I would make his children as numerous as the stars in heaven, and thou, O wicked king, contrivest to prevent them from multiplying. We shall see whose word will stand, Mine or thine."

While the men of Israel slept exhausted after their unspeakable toil, their faithful women labored to relieve and strengthen them. They hastened to the springs to bring pure water for their husbands to drink, and, by the grace of the All Merciful, it so happened that their pitchers were found, each time, to contain half water and half fish.

These devoted and diligent women dressed the fish, and prepared other good meats for their husbands. They brought the food to their husbands in the field, and encouraged them with their cheerful words. This loving attention of the women soothed the hearts of the men, and gave them fresh energy.

3. *The Pious Midwives*

One hundred and twenty-five years had now elapsed from the time Jacob came to Egypt. The councillors and elders of Egypt presented themselves again before Pharaoh and complained to him that in spite of the fact that the Israelites had been reduced to slavery, they had increased and multiplied and become very mighty in the land. When the king was unable to think of a new way in which to oppress the Hebrews, he asked the councillors for their advice. Balaam the son of Beor then spoke to Pharaoh: "It was well, indeed, that the king laid heavy tasks upon the Hebrews and enslaved them; but that alone does not suffice. It is necessary that their number be diminished, so that they may not overwhelm us by sheer weight of numbers and drive us out of the land. Therefore, let the king give orders to the Hebrew nurses to kill every male child that is born to the Hebrews, but to spare the lives of all the female children."

This counsel pleased the king well. He summoned the Hebrew midwife Jochebed and her daughter Miriam, and commanded them to slay all male children, but to allow the daughters of the Hebrews to live.

Now Miriam was only five years old, nevertheless she was already of great assistance to her

mother in nursing women. Both showed the utmost kindness to the new-born children, washed them and brushed them up, said pretty things to them, and strengthened the mothers with cordials and tonic draughts. Due to the great care taken by these kind nurses, no child born under their ministration came into the world lame or blind or afflicted with any other blemish. The two women were such favorites with the people that they called one Shiphrah (the soother or beautifier) and the other Puah (the helper).

When Jochebed and Miriam heard the decree of Pharaoh, Miriam exclaimed: "Woe to the man! God will punish him for his evil deed." The executioner would have killed her for her audacity, but the mother implored for pardon, saying: "O king! forgive her speech; she is only a little foolish child."

Pharaoh consented, and assuming a gentler tone, explained that female children were to be spared, and that the male children were to be quietly put to death, without the knowledge of the mothers. "Now," said the king to them, "you hear my command, if you do not obey my wishes, you will be cast into a furnace of fire." But Jochebed and Miriam would not carry out his command. God therefore rewarded them, for of the former Moses was born, and from Miriam's union with Caleb sprang the royal house of David.

4. *A Bad Dream*

Five years passed, and one night Pharaoh dreamed that, as he sat upon the throne, an old man stood before him holding a pair of scales in his hand. The old man took all the nobles, elders and great men of Egypt, bound them together and put them on one scale of the balance. On the other scale he put a suckling kid, and the kid outweighed them all.

In the morning, when Pharaoh awoke, he called for his favorite councillors Jethro, Job and Balaam, and said: "Hearken you to my dream and tell me its meaning." Thereupon he related his dream.

Then answered Balaam, and said: "O King, may you live forever! The dream you dreamt signifies this: A child will be born among the Hebrews, who shall bring destruction to our people and to our land. He will lead the Hebrews with a strong hand out of Egypt, and before him all the nations will tremble. Take heed, therefore, for a great danger threatens you and all Egypt."

"What shall we do?" said Pharaoh in dismay. "All that we have devised against this people has failed. How then can we blot them out from the face of the earth?"

"Let the king suffer me to give him my advice," said Jethro.

"You may speak," replied the king.

"May the king's days be multiplied!" said Jethro. "This is my advice: the people that you oppress are a great people. God chose them in the days of old from amongst all the nations of the earth, and He is their shield. All who resist them are brought to destruction; all who favor them, prosper. Therefore, O king, withdraw your hand, which is very heavy upon them; lighten their tasks, and extend to them your favor."

This advice pleased neither Pharaoh nor his councillors. The king's anger was kindled against Jethro and he drove him out of his court and from the country. Then Jethro with his wife and daughters left Egypt and settled in the land of Midian.

Then said the king: "Job of Uz, give us your opinion."

But Job held his peace and said nothing.

Then rose Balaam, son of Beor, and said: "O king, all your attempts to harm Israel have failed, and the people continue to thrive. Think not to try fire against them, for that was tried against Abraham their father, and he was saved unhurt from the midst of the flames. Try not the sword against them, for the knife was raised against Isaac their father, and he was delivered by an angel of God. Nor will hard labor injure them, as has been proved, for their father Jacob was subjected by Laban to all manner of hard work, and yet he

prospered. There remains water, however, that has not yet been tried either against them or their fathers; prove them with water. Therefore my advice is to cast all their new-born sons into the Nile."

5. *The Innocent Are Saved*

Pharaoh hesitated not; he appointed Egyptian women as nurses to the Hebrew women, and instructed them to drown all the male children that were born. He threatened with death all those who would withstand his decree. The Hebrew women then began to conceal their new-born children, so that they might not be discovered by the king's officers who were sent to Goshen to search for them. The Egyptians then thought of a devilish plan. The Egyptian women were to take their little ones into the houses of the Hebrew women who were suspected of hiding their children. Now it is the habit of children that when one cries, another cries also. When, therefore, the Egyptian women went into a Hebrew house, they would prick their babes, which caused the children to cry; then the Hebrew children that were kept in hiding would also cry. Thereupon the Egyptians would bring out the Hebrew children from their hiding places, and cast them into the Nile.

As a result, the Hebrew women who were about to give birth to a child, would go out into the

field, and sit down in the shade of an apple-tree. God would then cause a deep sleep to fall upon the suffering women, who gave birth during their sleep. On awakening and finding a new-born babe, the woman, fearing the king's penalty, would abandon the child in the field and return home, exclaiming: "O most Merciful One, into Thy hands I have committed my child!" God would then send down His angels, who washed and dressed the babe, smeared his little body with ointments, and stretched his limbs. Then they put two smooth pebbles into his little hands, from one of which he sucked milk, and from the other honey. God also caused the hair of the babes to grow down to their knees and this served them as clothes to protect them from heat and cold.

But finally the officers of the king discovered this also and were about to slay all the children that were in the fields. "Open thy mouth," said God to the earth, "and protect My children!" The earth immediately opened and received the babes into a hollow place where they were sheltered until they grew up. There they were fed by angel hands with butter and honey, and they grew up strong and healthy.

The Egyptians brought oxen and ploughed the fields, in the hope of destroying thereby the vanished infants, but they were unable to do them harm. When the babies grew up, the earth would

open its mouth and vomit forth the children, who thus sprang from the soil like flowers, and walked home unperceived by the Egyptians. Thus the children of Israel increased and multiplied exceedingly.

Chapter XXVIII

MOSES

1. *His Birth*

KOHATH, son of Levi, had a son named Amram, who took to himself Jochebed as wife. She was one of the midwives who had risked their lives in order to save the lives of the children. To Jochebed a daughter was born who was named Miriam, "Bitterness," for it was at the time of her birth that the Egyptians began to embitter the lives of the Jews. Four years later Jochebed bore Amram a son whom he named Aaron.

One day, as Miriam was sitting in the house, the spirit of prophecy came upon her, and she announced: "My parents will have another son, who shall deliver Israel out of the hands of the Egyptians!" After the expiration of six months, Jochebed gave birth to another son. The child entered this world on the seventh day of the month of Adar, in the year two thousand six hundred and sixty-eight after the Creation, and in the one hundred and thirtieth year of the sojourn of the Israelites in Egypt. When he was born, the

house was filled with light as with the brightest sunshine.

The mother's anxiety for her son was increased when she noted his beauty, for he was like an angel of God in his size and noble appearance. The parents called him Tobias (God is good), but others say he was called Jekutiel (Hope in God). Amram kissed his daughter Miriam on the brow and said: "Now I know that your prophecy was true."

2. *Moses Is Saved*

Jochebed hid the child for three months, but after that she could no longer hide him, for she knew that the Egyptians were watching her, and should the child be discovered, she and her husband would be killed by the king's officers.

Jochebed took rushes, fashioned them into a basket, which she coated with pitch and then lined it with clay, in order that the smell of the pitch might not irritate her dear little one. She took the basket and, after putting the child into it, placed it in the Red Sea, at the point where (at that time) it was joined by the Nile. Amram, forced to expose the child to danger, smote Miriam on the head, and said: "Now, daughter, where is your prophecy?"

Miriam followed the basket as it floated in and out among the reeds; for Miriam was wondering whether or not her prophecy would come true.

At that moment the angels surrounded the

throne of Divine Justice and complained: "Lord of the world, shall this wonderful child perish this day by water?"

"Ye know that I behold all things," replied the Almighty. "This child shall not perish by water, for he is destined to chant, at the head of My chosen people, the great song of deliverance from water. They that seek to find salvation in their own evil ways, shall find destruction, but they who trust in Me shall never be confounded. The history of this child shall be a witness to My almighty power."

Now Malol, king of Egypt, had only one daughter, whom he greatly loved. Thermutis was her name. She had been married for some time but was childless. This troubled her greatly, for she desired a son who might succeed her father to the throne of Egypt.

At the time Jochebed's child was abandoned by his parents, God caused the weather to become unbearably hot, and the people suffered greatly from its effects. Thermutis, the daughter of Pharaoh, also suffered, and she went to seek relief from the burning heat by bathing in the waters of the Nile.

On reaching the bathing-place, she observed the little basket floating among the bulrushes on the surface of the water, and sent one of her maids to swim out and to bring it to her. But the other servants protested and said: "O princess, this is

one of the Hebrew children, who were cast into the river according to the command of your father. It happens sometimes that a decree issued by the king is unheeded, yet it should be observed at least by his own children and the members of his family. It certainly behooves you not to oppose the order of your father and act against his will."

Scarcely had the maidens uttered these words than they vanished from the face of the earth. The angel Gabriel had caused them all to sink into the bosom of the earth, save the one who swam for the basket.

The princess became very eager to know what the basket contained, and could not wait until the maid returned with it. She stretched forth her arm to reach it, but the basket was sixty ells away from her. God wished that her effort be not in vain; He therefore caused her arm to be lengthened, so that she was able to take hold of the basket and draw it up on the shore.

Eager to know the contents of the basket, Thermutis opened it, and was astonished to behold the face of a child of a splendor like that of the sun. She looked at it with wonder, and admired its beauty. But she soon thought of her father's stern decree about the Hebrew children, and was about to return it to the waters and abandon it to its fate. At that moment Gabriel came down from

heaven, gave the child a box on the ear so that it began to weep, and little Aaron, aged three, who had been watching with Miriam, wept also. The princess, touched by the weeping of the two children, decided to save the wonderful babe.

Miriam, who had hid away among the rushes, moved not one way or the other and anxiously awaited the result. God then said: "Because Miriam has done this out of pity for her brother, therefore a day will come when six hundred thousand foot-soldiers shall wait for her; the priests, the ark of the covenant of the Lord, and the seven clouds of glory shall not move until she shall be wholly healed from her illness and able to proceed on the way."

The princess then called an Egyptian woman, and bade her suckle the child, but the infant would not take the breast from the woman. She called for other Egyptian women, but he would not take milk from their breasts either. For God said: "Let the good mother who took care of so many Hebrew little children, be now rewarded and have her own child restored to her." He therefore caused the babe not to take any nourishment from an Egyptian woman.

Then Miriam, the babe's sister, joined those who came up, and said to the princess: "Noble Lady! vain are all your attempts to give the child the breast from one of a different race. If you would

have a Hebrew woman, then let me fetch one, and the child will suck at once."

This advice pleased the princess and she said to Miriam: "Go and seek out for me a Hebrew mother to take care of this child."

With winged steps Miriam hastened home, and brought her mother Jochebed to the princess. Then the babe readily took nourishment and ceased to cry. Astonished at this wonder, the king's daughter said to Jochebed, unaware that she was speaking the truth: "Here is what is yours. Take and nurse the babe for me, and your wage shall be two pieces of silver a day." Jochebed did as she was bidden, but better reward than all the silver in Pharaoh's palace was the mother's joy at having her son restored to her.

On the self-same day the soothsayers and the star-gazers said to Pharaoh: "The child of whom we spoke to you, that should free Israel, has this day met his fate in the waters." Therefore the king withdrew the cruel decree ordering all the male children to be drowned in the Nile.

The soothsayers and the star-gazers had seen something in the stars but misinterpreted it. Water was indeed the doom of Moses, but that did not mean that he would perish in the waters of the Nile. It had reference to the waters of Meribah, the waters of strife, and how they would cause his death in the desert before he completed his task of bringing Israel into the promised land.

3. *The Babe Is Named Moses*

For two years the child stayed with his parents. They gave him various names. His father called him Eber. His mother's name for him was Jekuthiel. To his sister Miriam he was Jared. His brother Aaron called him Abi Zanoah. His grandfather knew him as Abi Gedor, and his nurse called him Abi Socco.

After a lapse of two years Jochebed weaned him, and brought him to the king's daughter. Thermutis, charmed with the beauty and intelligence of the child, took him into the palace, and named him Moses (who was drawn out of the water). Thereupon a voice from heaven was heard crying: "Daughter of Pharaoh! because thou hast had compassion on this little child and hast called him thy son, therefore do I call thee Bithia (My daughter). The foundling whom thou cherishest shall be called by the name thou gavest him—Moses—and by no other name shall he be known, whithersoever his fame shall spread under the whole heaven."

On account of his exceeding beauty, every one that saw him was filled with admiration, and said: "Truly, this is a king's son." One day, when Moses was three years old, Bithia led him by the hand into the presence of Pharaoh. The queen sat by the king, and all the princes of the realm stood about him. Then Bithia presented the child

to the king, and said: "Oh, Father! this child of noble appearance is not really my son; he was given to me in wondrous fashion by the divine river Nile; therefore have I brought him up as my son, and destined him to succeed you on your throne since no child of my own has been granted to me." With these words Bithia laid the child in the king's arms, and he pressed him to his heart and kissed him.

4. *Gabriel Saves Moses*

One day Pharaoh was dining in his palace, with the queen at his right hand, his daughter Bithia with the boy Moses on her lap at his left, and Balaam the son of Beor with his two sons and all the princes of the realm sitting at table in the king's presence. The infant took the crown from off the head of the king and placed it on his own head.

The king and his nobles were terrified. They thought that this action betokened that evil would come to the king through the child that was before them. Then Balaam, the son of Beor, spoke to the king, saying: "My lord and king! do you not remember the interpretation of your dream, as your servant had interpreted it to you? This child is of Hebrew extraction, and is wiser and more cunning than befits his age. Let not the king imagine that, being a mere child, he did it without knowledge. It signifies that when he grows old he will

take the crown from your head and put it on his own.

"Thus have his ancestors ever done. Abraham caused the defeat of the armies of Nimrod, king of Babel, and of Abimelech, king of Gerar, and obtained possession of the land of the children of Heth and the whole realm of Canaan. Isaac prevailed over the king of the Philistines. Jacob took from his brother his birthright and blessing, and smote the Hivites. Joseph, the slave, became chief in the king's realm, and gave the best of this land to his father and his brothers. And now this child will take from you the kingdom, and will enslave or destroy your people. My advice, therefore, is, O king, that you slay this child before he grows up and becomes a menace to you and to your people."

"We will take other counsel," said Pharaoh, "before we decide the fate of this child."

The king then called for all the wise men of Egypt, and the angel Gabriel, in the form of an old man, appeared with the councillors. Some advised that the child be burned with fire, and others that he be slain with the sword. Then Gabriel spoke up, and said: "Let no innocent blood be shed. The child is too young to know what he is doing. Prove whether he has any understanding, before you sentence him to death. O king! let a bowl of live coals and a bowl of precious stones be placed before the little one. If

he takes the stones, then he has understanding and discerns between good and evil, but if he stretches his hand toward the burning coals, then we shall know that he is innocent and that he took the crown without any purpose or design."

This advice pleased the king, and he ordered his servants to do as the angel had suggested.

Now, when the basins were brought in and offered to Moses, he thrust out his hands to reach the jewels. But Gabriel, who had made himself invisible, caught his hand and directed it toward the red-hot coals. The coals burned the child's hand, and he lifted it and touched his mouth with it, thus burning part of his lips and part of his tongue; and this explains why Moses said, in after days: "I am slow of lips and slow of tongue."

Pharaoh and his councillors were now convinced of the simplicity of Moses, and no harm was done him. Then Bithia removed him from the king's presence, and brought him up in her own part of the palace.

God was with Moses and he increased in stature and beauty, and the heart of Pharaoh was softened toward him. Masters were brought for him from all parts of the country, and he was instructed in all the wisdom and learning of the Egyptians, and the people looked on him with hope as their future sovereign.

CHAPTER XXIX

THE YOUTH OF MOSES

1. *Moses Among His People*

WHEN Moses had passed beyond the years of childhood, he reached the summit of earthly greatness. He was acknowledged as the grandson of Pharaoh, and as the heir to the crown. But he cared not for all this greatness, for he had learned from his mother Jochebed, whom he visited very often, who were his true people, and who were his real parents.

Moses began to visit his brothers in Goshen almost daily, and he observed how his people were oppressed and how they groaned under their burdens. He inquired of the Israelites why the heavy burden had been put upon them, and he was told of the evil advice of Balaam against his people, and of the way in which Pharaoh had sought to destroy them all. Moses became very angry at Pharaoh and his evil advisers, but as he was unable to save his people, or to punish Balaam, he cried out: "Alas! I had rather die than to continue to behold the cruel oppression of my brothers."

Moses sought to ease the lot of the Israelites by

shouldering part of their burden and toil. He took the excessive loads of the women and old men, and laid them upon the young and the strong. By this Moses not only gave relief to the Israelites, but he also gained favor with Pharaoh, who thought Moses wished to have the work of building done sooner.

And a heavenly voice was heard, saying: "Moses, because thou hast dismissed all thought of high position at the king's court, and hast cast in thy lot with the suffering children of Israel, whom thou dost treat as thy brethren, therefore will I, too, lay aside all heavenly and earthly affairs and converse with thee only."

Moses also lightened the sufferings of the people by speaking encouraging words to them: "Be of good cheer, relief is not far off as you suppose—calm follows the storm, blue skies succeed black clouds, sunshine comes after rain."

2. *Sabbath Observed in Egypt*

Moses kept ever before his eyes the one aim of his life: to relieve his people from their heavy burdens. One day he presented himself before the king and said: "Sire! I have a petition to lay before you."

"Speak on, my son," Pharaoh answered.

Then spoke Moses: "It is a fact that if a slave is not given rest at least one day in the week, he will die from overwork. Now the children of Israel

are given no day of rest, but work from the first of the week to the last day. Their work is therefore unsatisfactory, and in time to come they will all perish from overwork. Give them rest one day in the week to renew their strength, and you shall have better work done and save the lives of your much-needed slaves."

"Which day shall be given them?" asked Pharaoh.

"Suffer them to rest on the seventh day," said Moses.

The king consented, and a royal decree was published in the whole realm of Egypt and in Goshen, as follows: "To the sons of Israel! Thus says the king: 'Do your work on six days, but on the seventh day you shall rest; on this day you shall do no labor. Thus shall you do at all times, according to the command of the king and the command of Moses the son of Bithia.' "

There was great rejoicing in the land of Goshen, wherever the king's command was published. The day appointed by Moses as the day of rest was Saturday, later ordained by God to the Israelites as the Sabbath day.

3. *The Flight of Moses*

Moses continued to do all he could to help out his suffering brothers. One day while young Moses was walking along in the streets of Goshen, he saw an Egyptian taskmaster mercilessly beating

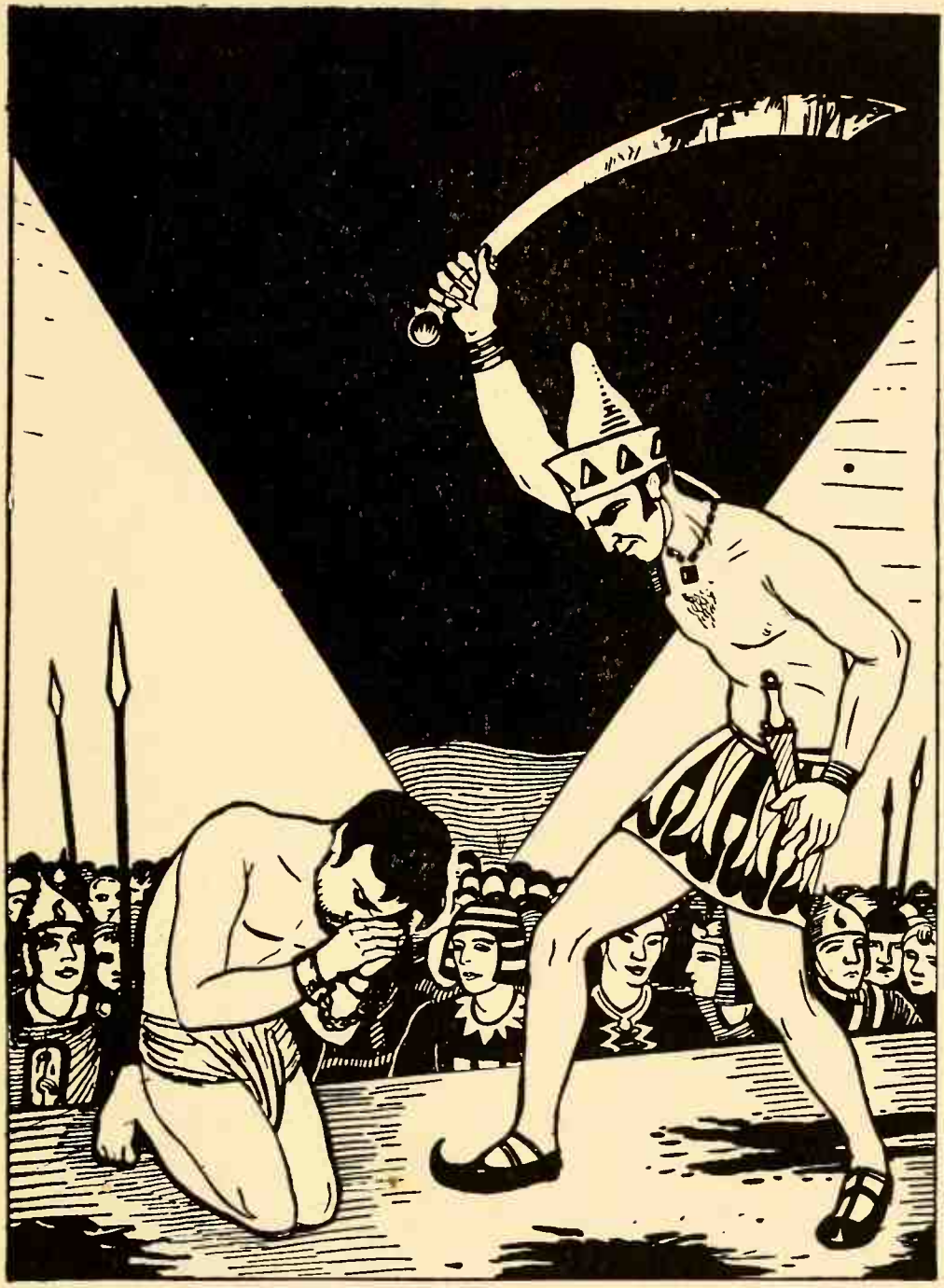
one of the Hebrews. The anger of Moses was kindled against the Egyptian, he pronounced the name of God, and the Egyptian became a corpse.

Then Moses looked on the Hebrews who crowded around him and said: "God has declared that you shall be as the sand of the sea-shore. Now the sand falls and it is noiseless; the foot of man presses it, and it makes no sound. Therefore understand that you are to be as silent as the sand of the sea-shore, and tell not of what I have done this day."

The day after this incident occurred Moses again went to visit his brothers in Goshen. There were at their task two young men, brothers, Dathan and Abiram, of the tribe of Reuben. The brothers began quarreling with each other, and Dathan raised his hand to smite Abiram. Then Moses came up, stayed Dathan and exclaimed: "You wicked man, why do you strike your comrade? It is wicked for men to lay violent hands on one another."

"Beardless young man," said Dathan boldly, "who has made you ruler and judge over us? We know well that you are the son of Jochebed, though people call you the son of Bithia. Will you slay us as you did the Egyptian yesterday, by pronouncing the Name of God?"

Then Dathan and Abiram went before Pharaoh and told him that Moses had slain an Egyptian taskmaster. The king's anger was kindled



The Executioner stood over Moses with the sword

against Moses, and he cried: "Enough evil has been prophesied of him, and I did not heed it, and now he lifts his hand against my servants!" A royal order was issued for the arrest of Moses, and he was condemned to be put to the sword.

Moses was brought forth to be executed. He ascended the scaffold, and the executioner stood over him with the sword, the like of which was not to be found in the whole world.

Thereupon the angels presented themselves before God, and said: "Moses is held under restraint."

"I will contend his cause," God replied.

"But," the angels urged, "his death sentence has been pronounced; nay, they have led him to the place of execution, and the executioner is now standing over him with his sword."

"I will contend his cause," was again God's reply.

When the king gave the word, the headsman mightily smote the outstretched neck of Moses with his sharp sword. But the Lord turned the neck of Moses into ivory. Ten times did the headsman smite, and each time the sword proved ineffective and harmless.

Thereupon the angel Michael, in the guise of the executioner, took the sword, instantly gave to the headsman the appearance of Moses, and cut his head off, while Moses fled, unobserved, and went to the king of Ethiopia.

4. *Balaam's Rebellion*

The pride of Balaam was deeply hurt when Pharaoh refused to follow his advice and kill Moses. Because of that, Balaam and his sons left Egypt and settled in Ethiopia, where he was honored by the king and appointed to a high office.

After the lapse of some time, a war broke out between the king of Ethiopia, Kikanos (Candaous) by name, and the nations of the East, who until that time had been subject to him. When the king left the capital city, Mero, at the head of a mighty army, he left Balaam and his two sons to keep guard over the city and take charge of the people that remained at home.

While the king was engaged in the war, Balaam and his two sons conspired against him. They bewitched the people with their enchantments, and persuaded them to reject the rule of the king, and submit to Balaam as their king. To cut Kikanos off from his capital, Balaam fortified the city on all sides. On two sides he built high walls, on the third side, between the Nile and the city, he dug many canals, into which he let the water run, and on the fourth side he assembled by his magic arts a large collection of snakes and scorpions. Thus none was able to depart from the city, and none could enter.

When King Kikanos returned victoriously from the war, he saw that his capital was fortified, and

he said: "My faithful subjects have fortified the city so that the kings of Canaan might not be able to enter." But when he was refused admission to the city, he knew that there was treason afoot.

Kikanos then declared war against the city and proceeded to fight against it. On the first day of the war one hundred and thirty of his valiant men fell in an engagement before the gates of the city. On the second day he lost thirty of his horsemen, who tried to cross the stream. He then threw thirty pontoons across the river, but when the soldiers reached the other side, they were drowned in the canals in which the water was foaming with fury as though driven by great mill-wheels. On the third day he assaulted the town on the fourth side, but his men were bitten by the serpents and one hundred and seventy men perished. Then King Kikanos saw that the only hope of conquering the city was by famine; accordingly, he besieged it, so that no provision might be brought into it.

While the king was thus besieging the capital, Moses, in his flight from Pharaoh, took refuge in his camp. He at once found favor with the king and his whole army. He attracted the attention of all those who saw him, for he was as slender as a palm-tree, his countenance shone like the morning sun, and his strength was equal to a lion's. He was treated by the king with great honor and distinction, and he was appointed by him as the commander-in-chief of all his forces.

In the ninth year of the siege, King Kikanos fell ill and died. Then the chieftains of his armies assembled, and said to one another: "Let us take counsel and consider what is to be done. We have been staying in the wilderness away from our homes for nine years. If we fight against the city, many of us will perish, and if we remain here besieging it, we shall also die. For when the princes of Aram and all the children of the East, our old enemies, will hear that our king has died, they will attack us suddenly, and they will fight with us until not a remnant of us is left. Now let us elect a king over us so that we may continue our siege against the city until it shall surrender to us."

5. *Moses King of Ethiopia*

The captains of the armies, after long deliberation, could find none except Moses fit to be king of Ethiopia. They threw off their outer garments, folded them, made thereof a throne, and set Moses upon it. They blew their trumpets and cried: "God save King Moses! God save King Moses!" They gave him costly gifts of gold and silver and precious stones, but all these he laid aside in the treasury.

On the seventh day after the coronation the captains and the officers came before him, to ask his counsel about how the city might be taken. Then

said Moses: "Nine years have you besieged it, and it is not yet in your power. Follow my advice, and in nine days it shall be yours."

"Speak, and we shall obey," they all said.

"Make it known throughout the camp that all the soldiers are to go into the woods and bring me as many storks' nests as they can find," the new king advised his captains.

They followed the advice of Moses, and numberless young storks were brought in from the woods into the camp. "Now," said Moses to his captains, "keep the storks fasting until I give you word."

The storks were kept fasting, and on the third day, the king ordered that they be taken over to that side of the city where the serpents were found. "Let the birds go," was the king's command when they reached that spot.

As soon as the hungry storks were let loose and flew into the air, they spied the serpents. The birds swooped down and devoured all the serpents, so that none remained. "Now," said Moses to the army, "march into the city."

The army entered the city, destroying all that dared oppose them, and not one of the king's army fell during the fight. When the people saw that Moses had put them into the possession of their capital without the loss of even a single warrior, they placed the crown upon his head, and they

again proclaimed him king. But Balaam and his two sons escaped to Egypt, riding in the air upon a cloud.

8. *The False Redeemer*

In the one hundred and eighteenth year after Jacob and his sons came into Egypt, there arose in Egypt a man from the tribe of Ephraim whose name was Yognon. He came to the elders of Israel and said: "The God of our forefathers appeared to me, and said: 'Go, and redeem My people Israel from the Egyptian yoke; for the time of redemption has arrived.' "

The elders of the tribes had no confidence in the man's words, and therefore dismissed him from their presence. But the tribe of Ephraim believed in their prophet, and, relying upon their might, took with them their weapons of war, and left Egypt by forcing their way through. They took no food with them, but silver and gold. "For," said they, "we shall buy food from the Philistines and their neighbors, and if they refuse to sell it to us, we will take it from them by force."

The Ephraimites continued their journey for some time without food, when they saw some shepherds tending flocks in a field near Gath. "Sell us some of your sheep," said the Ephraimites to the shepherds.

"These sheep do not belong to us," replied the shepherds, "and therefore we cannot sell them to you."

The Ephraimites approached the shepherds, intending to take the sheep from them by force, for they were very hungry. The shepherds cried for help, and in response to their call, all the people of Gath went out to fight off the intruders. In the battle which lasted some time many were slain on both sides.

On the following day the people of Gath called in the Philistines to help them fight off the intruders. Together they now fought the Ephraimites, defeated them, and the entire valley of Gath was filled with the bones of the slain. These bones lay there until the Prophet Ezekiel brought them to life again by the words of his mouth. But a few of the Ephraimites escaped and ran back into Egypt to tell the story.

Chapter XXX

MOSES IN MIDIAN

1. *Moses Resigns the Crown*

MOSES continued to reign in Ethiopia. All his subjects loved him and honored him, for he conducted the government in righteousness and wisdom, and the land prospered. But Queen Adoniah, the wife of Kikanos, whom Moses refused to take unto him as his wife, as well as a party of nobles, thought that the son of their late king ought to ascend the throne of his ancestors. At the time Moses ascended the throne, the crown prince was an infant and therefore unable to rule, but now that he was a man, the queen and some nobles wanted to proclaim him king.

One day, while Moses was sitting on his throne surrounded by all the nobles, Adoniah, the queen, rose and said: "Men of Ethiopia! It is known to you that for many years Moses has reigned over us. Well do you know that he has ruled in righteousness and wisdom. But know also that his God is not our God, and that his faith is not our faith. My son, Mena-Cham (Minakros), is of fitting age to succeed his father and reign over you. It

is my opinion that Moses should surrender the throne to my son, for it is better for you to serve the son of your lord than to serve a stranger, a slave of the king of Egypt."

An assembly of the people was called to consider whether to heed the words of the queen. After many arguments for and against the proposition, the advice of the queen was accepted, and they requested Moses to resign the crown to the rightful heir. He consented, and without the least hesitation surrendered the crown to Mena-Cham. Laden with many precious gifts, and sent off with great honor, Moses left Ethiopia and went to Midian, for he feared to return to Egypt.

2. *Jethro*

Jethro had, after taking flight from Egypt, taken up his residence in Midian. There the people raised him to the position of priest and prince over the whole tribe. But as time passed, Jethro grew more and more convinced that the idols he and his people served were vain and helpless, and he began to believe in the one true God.

One day he called together the people of the tribe, and said to them: "Behold I have grown old and am no longer able to perform the duties of priest before your gods. Choose therefore whomever you like to be in my place." The Midianites found out later that Jethro had given up his office because he despised their gods, and they placed

him under ban, that none might give him aught to eat or drink, or serve him.

Jethro was greatly troubled by this, for all his shepherds had forsaken him, as he was under ban, and he was unable to obtain even the slightest help from any of the sons of the tribe. Thus it was that his seven daughters were compelled to pasture and water the flock.

When Moses entered Midian, he arrived near a well and sat down to rest from his journey. While sitting by the well, he saw the seven daughters of Jethro approaching with their flocks.

The maidens had gone early to the well, for they feared that the shepherds should molest them on account of the ban and even refuse to let them take water for their sheep. Finding no shepherds at the well, they let down their pitchers in turn, and with much trouble filled the troughs. Suddenly the shepherds came up, drove them away, and led their sheep to the troughs the maidens had filled. But Moses stood up and rebuked the shepherds.

Then Moses let down his own pitcher into the well to fill it, and the water from the well leaped up and overflowed. He filled the troughs and let the flocks of the seven maidens drink, and then he watered the flocks of the shepherds, lest there should arise evil feeling among them. It was the same well at which Jacob had met Rachel, the well that God had created at the beginning of the

world, the opening of which He made in the twilight of the first Sabbath eve.

3. *The Wonderful Rod*

The seven maidens went home, and Moses secretly followed them so that no mischief befall them at the hands of the shepherds. Jethro was amazed to see his daughters return so soon from watering the flock, and he inquired of his daughters: "How is it that you have returned so soon to-day?"

"An Egyptian helped us water the flock, and saved us from the hands of the shepherds," the maidens replied. Moses had been standing outside of Jethro's house all this time, but did not correct the maidens' statement. At once there was heard a voice from heaven: "Because Moses had heard the daughters of Jethro describe him as an 'Egyptian,' and did not protest and say, 'No, I am no Egyptian but an Israelite,' therefore shall he be punished and die outside of the promised land, and his remains shall not be buried there."

"Where is the man that has shown such kindness to you?" asked Jethro. "Bring him to me." So Zipporah, one of the seven maidens, ran outside and bade Moses enter under their roof-tree and eat at their table.

When Moses came to Jethro, the old man asked where he came from, and Moses told him all that had happened to him in Egypt and in Ethiopia.

Then Jethro thought to himself: "This man has been driven out of Egypt and out of Ethiopia; he must be a dangerous man."

Then he took Moses, bound him in chains and threw him into a dungeon, where no food was sent him. But Zipporah loved him and was grateful to him for the kindness he had shown her. Every day she brought him food and drink, and Moses in return would instruct her in the law of the Most High.

Thus passed seven, or, as others say, ten years. In the meantime the Midianites were reconciled to Jethro, and many princes came to ask for the hand of Zipporah his daughter, who was as beautiful as the morning star.

Now in Jethro's garden there grew a wonderful rod. It is the rod that the Holy One, blessed be He, created in the twilight of the first Sabbath eve, and which He gave to Adam. Adam had given it to Enoch, from him it descended to Noah, then to Shem, then to Abraham, then to Isaac and finally to Jacob, who brought it to Egypt and gave it to his son Joseph. When Joseph died, the Egyptians pillaged his house, and the rod, which was a part of their booty, was taken to Pharaoh's palace. At that time Jethro was at the head of the most prominent of Pharaoh's sacred castes, and as such he had the opportunity of seeing the rod, on which was engraved the Ineffable Name, and the ten plagues which God would cause to visit the Egyptians at

a future day. Jethro stole the staff, and for many years it remained in his house. One day as he was walking in his garden carrying the rod, he stuck it in the ground. When he tried to take it out again, he found that it had sprouted, put forth blossoms, and he was unable to pull it out of the ground. "Now," said he to those who solicited the hand of his daughter Zipporah, "he, who can pluck this staff from the ground, shall take my daughter as his wife."

Then the strong chiefs of Edom and of Midian came and tried, but they could not move the staff.

One day Zipporah said to her father: "I recollect that many years ago you cast a man into a dungeon. Pray uncover the pit and look into it. If the man is dead, let his corpse be buried; but if he be alive, he is a godly man, and his life shall be spared."

Jethro was amazed at his daughter's recollection of the man in the dungeon, and he said: "Oh, I had forgotten him these many years; he surely must have died, for he has had no food."

"With God all things are possible," meekly replied Zipporah.

So Jethro went to the prison door, opened it, and to his great astonishment found the very man there whom he had cast into the dungeon ten years before. Then he brought him forth, kissed him, cut his hair, changed his garments, set him in his garden, and placed food before him.

Once, while in the garden, Moses noticed the wonderful rod planted there, and he went over to it and took it away. When Jethro returned into the garden, lo! Moses had the staff in his hand, whereupon Jethro cried out: "This is the man called by God to be a prince and a great man among the Hebrews, and to become famous throughout the world." And he gave him his daughter Zipporah to be his wife.

4. *Pharaoh's Punishment*

In the meantime Pharaoh continued to be cruel toward the children of Israel. God punished Pharaoh for his cruel actions and visited him with leprosy. This horrible disease covered his entire body, from the crown of his head to the soles of his feet.

The king summoned to him all the magicians and the wise men of his land, and said to them: "Advise me how I can be cured from this terrible malady."

"You can regain your health, O king," said his advisers, "only if you will slaughter Israelitish children and bathe in their blood."

Pharaoh accordingly ordered his officers to snatch babes from their mothers and slaughter them, and in the blood of these innocents he bathed. He suffered from the disease of leprosy for ten years, and every day an Israelitish child was killed for him, but it was all in vain. At the

end of this time his leprosy changed into boils, and he suffered more than ever.

At that time two of the king's officers came from Goshen and reported to the king: "The children of Israel are idle in their labor, and do not carry out the king's orders." This report angered the king greatly, and he said: "Now that I am ill they disregard my orders. Harness my chariot, and I will go to Goshen and punish those slaves for their disobedience."

The king was put upon a chariot, and he set out for Goshen, accompanied by many chariots and horsemen. When he and his men reached the border of Goshen, the king's steed entered a narrow passage, where it suddenly took fright, slipped, and fell. The chariot was upset and fell upon Pharaoh, and the horse too lay on the top of him. The king's flesh was torn and bruised, and he uttered wild shrieks of agony. His servants came to his rescue, put him on their shoulders and carried him back to Egypt. He knew that his end was near and the queen Alfar'anit and his nobles gathered about his bed and wept bitterly with him.

The princes and the king's councillors advised him to choose his successor to the throne. He had three sons and two daughters. The name of the first-born was Atro; the name of the second, Adikam, and the name of the third Moryon. Atro was an idiot, while Adikam was a clever man versed in all the wisdom of Egypt, but he was

very short and fleshy, and his beard flowed down to his ankles.

The king's suffering increased steadily, and he ordered that Adikam be brought before him, that he might be proclaimed king over the land of Egypt. At the end of three years the old king of Egypt died in shame and disgrace, after having reigned for ninety-four years.

5. *Children in the Place of Bricks*

Adikam was twenty years old when he succeeded his father. The Egyptians called him Pharaoh, as was their custom with all their kings, but the princes and the wise men called him Akuz, which means "short" in the Egyptian language. The new king surpassed his father Malol in wickedness.

He oppressed the children of Israel greatly and he made their yoke heavier. He went to Goshen to order their labor increased, and he said to them: "From this day on you must complete your task each day, and let not your hands slacken from the work, as you did in the days of my father." He appointed officers over them from amongst the children of Israel, and over these officers he appointed taskmasters from amongst the Egyptians.

A royal decree went forth that every Israelite must make a certain number of bricks each day. If for some reason or other an Israelite was unable to make the required amount of bricks, his house

was entered by the taskmaster, his children were taken from their mother by force and put into the building instead of the missing bricks. For each brick that was missing, the taskmasters took a child, and sometimes they even forced the fathers to put their own babies into the walls. The father would place his own child on the rising wall and cover him over with mortar and bricks. The father's tears would run down upon the child, while the child, buried alive, would weep and cry bitterly, but there was no one to heed his cries.

The groans and the sighs of the parents and the cries of the dying children reached heaven. God saw the burden of the children of Israel, heard their groans, and said: "The children of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob have repented, and they are now crying unto Me; I shall deliver them from the hands of their cruel oppressor, from the hands of Pharaoh, king of Egypt."

Chapter XXXI

MOSES APPOINTED BY GOD TO DELIVER HIS PEOPLE

1. *The Good Shepherd*

MOSES remained with his father-in-law, Jethro, who made him the shepherd of his flock. He watched over his flock with loving care, and he took care that no harm should befall the herds that were entrusted to him. He also took great care that his flock should do no harm to other men's property. He always chose an open meadow as his pasturing place, to prevent his sheep from grazing in private fields.

One day while Moses was tending his flock in a barren place, he saw that one of the lambs had left the flock and was trying to escape. The good shepherd pursued it, but the lamb ran so much the faster, and fled through valley and over hill, till it reached a mountain stream; then it halted and drank.

Moses now came up to it, looked at it with troubled countenance, and said: "My dear little friend! Then it was thirst that made you run so

far and seem to flee from me; and I knew it not! Poor little creature, how tired you must be!"

Moses then took up the lamb, placed it upon his shoulders, and carried it back to the flock.

While Moses was carrying the lamb, there came a voice from heaven: "Thou, who hast shown such great love, such great patience toward sheep, thou art surely worthy to be called upon to shepherd My people, the children of Israel."

2. *The Mission of Moses*

One day, as Moses was wandering with his flock in the desert, he reached Mount Horeb. He at once noticed that the mountain was a holy one, for the passing birds never alighted upon it. As he turned around, he saw a wonderful bush, all ablaze, but though the fire kept on burning, the bush was not consumed.

When Moses began to walk in the direction of the bush, he heard a voice, which was exactly like that of his father Amram, call out to him: "Moses, Moses!"

"Here I am," answered the overjoyed son, for he thought that it was his father who was calling him; "what is my father's wish?"

"I am not thy father," answered God. "I desired not to terrify thee, therefore I spoke in thy father's voice. I am the God of thy father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob."

Moses did not answer, but in silent reverence he covered his face, for he thought himself unworthy to look upon this Divine Apparition. God thereupon said: "Because thou art meek and thinkest that thou deservest not to look upon the Divine Apparition, therefore shalt thou stay with Me in heaven forty days and forty nights; thou shalt behold the Divine Presence, and thy face shall send forth beams, like the rays of the sun, so that people shall fear to approach thee."

God continued: "Moses my servant, the days of affliction that I allotted to Abraham's seed in My revelation to him have passed. Now the time has come for Me to fulfil My promise to their father Jacob, 'I will go down with thee into Egypt, and I will surely bring thee up again.' Go, therefore, before Pharaoh, the king of Egypt, and tell him to free My people."

"But who am I, that I should go to Pharaoh?" asked Moses. "And were it possible for me to bring the children of Israel out of the land of Egypt, how can I provide this great people with food and drink in the wilderness? How shall I be able to shelter them from the scorching heat or from rain? How shall I be able to provide the sick, the children and the babies, with their needs?"

"I will be with thee," came the reply from the midst of the thornbush. "I will provide My people with all their needs."

"But, Merciful God," argued Moses, who thought himself unfit for the mission, "Thou hast promised Jacob, 'I will surely bring thee up again out of Egypt.' Thou wert to do it Thyself, and now it is Thy purpose to send me thither. How can I venture to return to Egypt, where mine enemies are lying in wait for me?"

"Go, deliver My people from the land of their oppression," came the reply, "and I will be with thee whithersoever thou goest. I will be at thy side, and thou hast no cause to fear any man."

"But," pleaded Moses again, "if the children of Israel should ask me, 'Who sent you to us, and what is his name?' what shall I say to them?"

"I am known by My acts," answered God; "when I judge My creatures, I am called Elohim, 'Judge'; when I rise to do battle against the sinners, I am Lord Zabaoth, 'the Lord of hosts'; when I wield My might and power, My name is El Shaddai; and when I bestow My mercy upon the world, I am Adonai. But unto the children of Israel shalt thou say that I am He that was, that is, and that ever shall be; I am He that is with them in their bondage now, and He that shall be with them in their future bondage."

"But the life of Israel is now full of suffering and sorrow," said Moses, "why give them bad tidings of future suffering?"

"To them," said God, "say only that the Lord redeems them from their bondage. Tell them fur-

ther that at My will an angel can stretch out his hand from heaven and touch the earth, and at My will three angels can find room under one tree; at times My majesty can fill the whole world, and at others, when I will it otherwise, I speak from a bush."

3. *Moses Punished*

Moses still persisted and said: "Behold the people will not believe me, nor hearken unto my voice, for they will say, 'The Lord has not appeared to you.'"

"What is this in thy hand?" asked the Most High.

"This is my rod," Moses answered.

"With this staff shalt thou prevail over Pharaoh," said God. "But thou deservest punishment for having suspected My children of lack of faith. The children of Israel are believers and sons of believers. Cast the rod upon the ground."

When Moses cast it upon the ground, the rod was transformed into a serpent. This was to show Moses that he had followed the example of the slanderous serpent. Moses turned his back to run from it; but God said: "Fear not, take it up by the tail;" and when Moses did so, it became a rod in his hand.

"Put thy hand into thy bosom," said the Most Holy. And when Moses obeyed, and drew it forth, it was leprous, as white as snow. Leprosy is the punishment for slander.

But Moses still argued and said: "A grandchild is closer to a man than his nephew. Nevertheless when Lot was taken captive, Thou didst send angels to the aid of Abraham's nephew. But now, when the life of sixty myriads of Abraham's descendants are at stake, Thou choosest to send me, and not the angels. When the Egyptian bondwoman Hagar was in distress, thou didst send five angels to stand by her, and to redeem sixty myriads of the children of Sarah thou sendest me. O Lord, deliver them, I pray thee, by the hand of him whom Thou wilt send in days to come."

"Not to Israel, but to Pharaoh, do I send thee," said God. "The one whom thou didst mention, will be sent to Israel at the end of days; Elijah will appear to them before the great and terrible day."

Moses was not yet satisfied. "O Lord of the world," he said, "but my brother Aaron is older than I am, and he is accustomed to prophesy to Israel in Thy name and comfort them in their distress. How can I then ignore the good work of my brother and take upon myself to be the redeemer of Israel?"

"Aaron will not begrudge this to thee," said the Almighty. "On the contrary, he will be greatly pleased with the honor I bestow upon thee. Behold now my Holy spirit has already come upon him and he is awaiting thee on the way to Egypt. Because thou hast hesitated to accept My mission,

thou wilt lose the priesthood, for it was ordained that thou shouldst be the priest and Aaron should be the Levite. But because thou hast refused to execute my will, thou shalt be the Levite and Aaron thy brother shall be the priest."

But Moses still hesitated and said: "I am slow of lip and tongue."

"Let not this trouble thee," came the response. "It is I that made the mouths of all that speak, and it is I that make men dumb. To one I give sight, another I make blind; one I cause to hear, another I make deaf. Had it been My will, thou wouldst have been a man of eloquence. But I desire to show a miracle through thee."

4. *From Midian to Egypt*

Moses finally gave in and said: "O merciful God, I am ready to accept Thy mission. However, I am not able to return to Egypt unless I first obtain the permission of my father-in-law Jethro, for he has been kind to me, and he has provided me with food and shelter."

God was pleased with this request and He told Moses that he should first go back to Midian and ask for permission to go to Egypt.

Jethro readily consented to the request of Moses and urged him to return to Egypt to redeem his suffering brothers from bondage.

At last Moses started upon his journey to Egypt with his wife and sons.

Then God appeared to Aaron and said: "Thy brother Moses is returning to Egypt, for I have chosen him to be My prophet, and thee have I appointed to be My spokesman. Arise and go forth to meet him." Aaron followed God's bidding and went forth to meet Moses.

Aaron beheld his brother near the mountain of God, and he ran to meet him; he embraced him and asked where he had spent all the years since their separation.

"I spent most of my time in Midian," answered the overjoyed Moses.

"And who are these people with you?" inquired Aaron.

"They are my wife and sons," replied Moses.

"Where are you going with them?" questioned Aaron.

"To Egypt," replied Moses.

"What!" exclaimed Aaron: "Great enough are our sorrows on account of those who already are in Egypt, and do you desire to take more into the land?" Moses agreed that Aaron was right and sent his wife and sons back to his father-in-law Jethro.

Moses then told Aaron of God's revelation to him and his mission. He even disclosed to him all the great secrets that were communicated to him on Mt. Horeb.

Arrived in Egypt, Moses called all the elders of Israel together and told them that God had

sent him to redeem all the children of Israel from the land of Egypt. In order to convince them of the truth of his story, he performed the miracles which God had shown him at Horeb. But the elders paid little attention to what Moses said. They knew that Jacob had confided to Joseph the secret mark by means of which they could find out the right person designated by God to be their redeemer. Joseph had confided the secret to his brothers, and Asher, the last of the brothers to die, had confided it to his daughter Serah, who was still alive. The elders went to Serah and told her the words of Moses. When she heard from them what Moses had said in the name of God: "I have surely visited you, and seen that which is done to you in Egypt," she exclaimed before the elders: "This is the true redeemer, for these are the very words by which the true redeemer was to announce the redemption in the name of God." Then all the elders and the people believed in Moses.

Moses thereupon invited the elders to go with him to Pharaoh, and tell him all that God had commanded him, so that he might let the children of Israel go free. But they lacked the courage to appear before the king. Though they all started out with Moses, they dropped off one by one stealthily on the way, and when Moses and Aaron stood in the presence of the king, they found themselves deserted by all the elders.

This greatly displeased the Lord, and He said:

"When My beloved servant Moses shall ascend the Holy Mountain to receive the Torah, they, the elders, shall not be permitted to ascend with him. They shall accompany him on the way to Me only as far as they have accompanied him on the way to Pharaoh, and they will have to wait for him until he comes down again."

Chapter XXXII

BEFORE THE REDEMPTION

1. *In Pharaoh's Palace*

IT so happened that the day Moses and Aaron appeared before Pharaoh was the anniversary of the king's birth. Many kings from all over the world had come to do him homage on this occasion.

"There are two old men at the gate of the palace, who seek admission," announced the attendant before the king.

"Did these old men bring me crowns?" questioned the king.

"They have brought nought with them, sire," came the reply.

"They cannot be admitted to my presence," said the king.

Now the king's palace was surrounded by a very big army. It was provided with four hundred entrances, one hundred on each side, and each of them was guarded by sixty thousand soldiers. Moses and Aaron, upon seeing this display of power, became frightened, but the angel Gabriel came and led them into the palace, observed by none of the guards.

When Pharaoh looked at the messengers of Israel, he was stricken with awe

"Who admitted these two old men into my palace without my permission?" cried the infuriated king. And he ordered that some of the guards be slain and others be tortured. Angrily he dismissed the two old men. New guards were then placed at the entrances, and in addition two lions were placed at each and every gate, and no man was allowed to enter the palace unless Pharaoh gave the word.

But the next day the same thing happened: Moses and Aaron were in the palace, and the guards were unable to hinder them. As for the lions, Moses but raised his rod, and they leaped toward him joyously, and followed him barking like dogs, into the palace.

"Who are you, and what is your wish?" cried Pharaoh.

"The God of the Hebrews has sent me to you to request that you let His people go on a three days' journey into the wilderness, to sacrifice unto Him," said Moses.

"What is the name of your God?" asked Pharaoh. "Why did he not send me a crown on my anniversary? I do not know who your God is, neither will I consent to let the children of Israel go."

But when Pharaoh looked up at the messengers of Israel, he was stricken with great awe. For in stature they were as tall as the cedars of the Lebanon, their countenances radiated rays like those

of the sun, and the pupils of their eyes shone like the morning star. He then said in a softer voice to them: "Wait until I fetch the books of the chronicles of my archives, wherein are recorded the names of the gods of all the nations, and I will see whether or not the God of the Hebrews is also recorded there."

The books were brought before the king, and he ordered the scribe to read to him the names of the gods contained in them. The scribe read off a long list of the names of gods: the god of Midian, of Ethiopia, of Ziddon, etc. "Now," said Pharaoh to Moses and Aaron, "there is no mention of your God in my chronicles."

"Oh, you fool!" exclaimed Moses and Aaron, "you seek the living in the graves of the dead. Your chronicles contain the names of the gods that are dead, but our God is the God of life, the King of eternal life."

"But what is your God?" asked the king. "Is He young or old? How old was He when He became king? How many countries has He under His dominion? How many battles did He fight and win? How many countries or cities did He conquer? How many warriors does He lead forth to war?"

"The strength of our God and His power fill the whole world," replied Moses and Aaron; "His voice calls forth flames of fire; his words break mountains into pieces. Heaven is His throne, and

the earth is His footstool. His bow is fire, His arrows are flames, His spears torches, His shield clouds, and His word the lightning-flash. He has created the mountains and the valleys. He has brought forth spirits and souls; He suspended the earth by a word; He covers the heavens with clouds; at His word the rain and the dew descend; He causes plants to grow from the ground; He nourishes and sustains the whole world. He removes kings from power or causes them to ascend the throne."

"I have no need of your God," answered Pharaoh. "I have created myself and the river Nile, and there is no other God besides me in Egypt."

Pharaoh then summoned all his wise men and said to them: "Have you ever heard of the God of these people?"

"We have been told that He is a son of the wise, the son of the ancient kings," the wise men replied.

Then spoke God, saying: "Ye fools! Ye call yourselves wise men, but Me ye call only the son of the wise. Verily, I will set at naught all your wisdom and your understanding."

2. *Moses Complains*

Pharaoh, having dismissed the ambassadors of God, called together the taskmasters whom he had appointed over the Israelites, and said to them: "You shall no longer provide the Hebrews with straw, as you have done heretofore. They must

go out into the fields to pick the straw themselves, and they shall nevertheless be required to deliver the prescribed number of bricks." He also ordered his taskmasters no longer to allow the Hebrews to rest on the Sabbath, but to compel them on this day too to make the required number of bricks.

The taskmasters called together the elders of Israel, and told them of the king's decree, and warned them under penalty of death to see to it that the royal edict be carried out. Thereupon the children of Israel began to wander about in the fields of the Egyptians to gather the straw they needed for the bricks. They were abused and beaten by the Egyptians, and the suffering of the enslaved people increased tenfold. When the children of Israel were unable to produce the required number of bricks, the taskmasters ordered the elders to disclose to them the names of all those who were delinquent. The elders refused to disclose them, and as a result were severely beaten by the taskmasters. Then spoke God to the elders saying: "Because ye were gentle and kind unto My suffering people, therefore a day will come when I will cause My holy spirit to rest upon you, and ye shall be honored and loved by all the people."

This frightful period of Israel's agony lasted six months. In the meantime Moses went to Midian, leaving Aaron alone in Egypt. When Moses

returned and saw the great suffering of his people, he was sorely vexed, and he said to God: "O Master of the world! The punishments meted out by Thee to the generation of the Deluge, to the generation of the Confusion of Tongues, and to the inhabitants of Sodom, were just. But what has this nation of Israel done unto Thee, that it is oppressed more than any other nation on the face of the earth? Is it because Abraham said, 'Whereby shall I know that I shall inherit it,' for which Thou didst rebuke him, saying: 'Know of a surety that thy seed shall be a stranger in a land that is not theirs'? Why, then, are not the descendants of Esau and Ishmael held in bondage, too? Are they not likewise the seed of Abraham? But if Thou wilt say, 'What concern is it of thine?' then I ask Thee, 'Why didst Thou send me hither as Thy messenger?' For behold, O Lord, Pharaoh deals wickedly with the children of Israel, and their redemption has not yet come."

The angel Shaftiel then presented himself before God and said: "Does it behoove Thy prophet to speak thus? Does he not know that Thou art able to accomplish whatever seems good in Thine eyes? He certainly deserves punishment for having spoken thus."

"But he spoke thus to Me not on his own behalf," answered God, "but out of compassion for the children of Israel, therefore his unbecoming words shall be forgiven."

3. *Moses Performs the Miracles Before Pharaoh*

God thereupon said to Moses: "Go to Pharaoh, the king of Egypt, and tell him again that I sent thee to deliver the children of Israel from their bondage, and if he refuses to listen to thee, let Aaron perform the miracles before him."

Moses and Aaron again came to the king's palace, and repeated the message of God.

"Who will believe that you are the messenger of God, as you pretend to be, if you do not convince me by performing miracles?" asked Pharaoh.

Aaron thereupon cast down his rod, and it became a serpent. Pharaoh laughed aloud. "What!" he exclaimed, "is this all you can do? The school children of my country can perform such miracles as you have done." He ordered little school children to be brought, and they also cast their rods to the ground and the rods were turned into serpents.

Immediately Aaron's serpent swallowed up all the serpents of the little magicians. But Balaam, the chief magician, and his friends said: "There is nothing wonderful about this, for it is nothing but natural for a living being to devour another living being. If you wish us to admit that the spirit of God rests upon you, let your rod, in its natural wooden state, swallow our rods in their original wooden state."

Aaron then took hold of the serpent's tail, and it became a rod again. He told the magicians to throw their rods to the ground. After that he cast down his rod to the ground, and it swallowed up their rods, yet his rod remained of the same size as before, showing no increase either in thickness or length. Pharaoh then began to wonder whether this marvelous rod in the possession of Moses and Aaron might not swallow him and his throne also.

But, encouraged by the Egyptians, Pharaoh refused to obey the command of God through Moses and Aaron, and he said to them: "Never will I allow six hundred thousand men to go away from my land, where I require their services."

God then told Moses and Aaron that He would bring plagues upon the Egyptians and that they would finally let the children of Israel go.

Chapter XXXIII

THE PLAGUES

1. *The Plagues Brought Through Aaron*

ONE morning, as Pharaoh was walking by the bank of the Nile, Moses said to him: "Lo, if you refuse to let the children of Israel go, God will change all the waters of the land of Egypt into blood, and the Egyptians will have no water to drink." For three weeks Moses repeated this warning to Pharaoh and to the Egyptians, but they did not take it to heart.

By the command of God, Moses gave his staff to Aaron to bring on this plague. "For," said Moses, "let not the water which guarded me when I was a babe be smitten by me." Aaron stretched out his hand over the waters of the land of Egypt, and the waters at once changed into blood.

The Egyptians had no water to drink, and they dug up new wells in the hope of finding water, but to their disappointment the new wells also contained nothing but blood. They then visited the land of Goshen and found that the Hebrews had plenty of good water to drink, but as soon as the Egyptians took cups full of

this water it turned into blood in their hands. Thereupon they requested that the children of Israel take handfuls of water and allow them to drink from their hands, but as soon as the water touched the lips of the Egyptians it turned into blood. They again begged of the Hebrews to drink water with them from one and the same bowl, but it was of no avail, for the water was turned into blood in their mouths.

This plague lasted for a week, but Pharaoh refused to consider that as a punishment from God, because the magicians of the land of Egypt were also able to turn water into blood. He therefore refused to let the Hebrews go out of his land.

Moses came again before Pharaoh, and for three weeks gave him warning of the next plague. This warning, too, went unheeded. Thereupon Aaron stretched forth the rod over the river, and a single big frog appeared. This frog began to croak, and called forth so many of his kind that the whole land of Egypt swarmed with frogs. There was not a single place in the land of Egypt which was not full of them. The ovens, the beds, the closets, and every nook in the houses, in the barns and in the fields were full of frogs.

The magicians of the land of Egypt were also able to bring forth frogs from the river. But the frogs brought forth by Aaron caused so much discomfort to all the Egyptians as well as to the king that he told Moses that he was ready to let the

people go, if this awful plague would be removed. Moses prayed to God and all the frogs died. No sooner had the frogs disappeared from the land of Egypt than the king hardened his heart again.

God thereupon sent the plague of vermin upon the land of Egypt. The third plague was also brought on through Aaron, for God said: "Let not the earth be smitten by Moses, for it shielded him when it concealed the Egyptian he had slain."

The magicians, as in the first two plagues, tried to imitate Aaron and produce vermin too, but they were unable to do so. "This is really the finger of God," the magicians admitted. But the heart of Pharaoh remained hard, and God told Moses that he would bring more plagues upon the land in order that the children of Israel might be freed.

2. *The Plagues Brought Through Moses*

Early in the morning, at the river's brink, Pharaoh was warned by Moses that God would bring another plague upon the land of Egypt, if he refused to let the people go. The king took not this warning to heart, and God sent a mixed horde of wild beasts, lions, bears, wolves and many kinds of birds of prey. They devoured many Egyptians all over the land, but in the land of Goshen, where the children of Israel lived, there was not a single wild beast.

Pharaoh then called Moses and said to him: "You have my permission to sacrifice to your God

as you desire, but you cannot go into the wilderness. You must stay in the land."

"How can we sacrifice animals in the land of Egypt, when your people are accustomed to worship them?" protested Moses. "Will they not stone us for it?"

"You may go then to the wilderness, but do not go too far away," said Pharaoh.

But when Moses prayed to God and the mixed horde of wild animals were removed from the land, Pharaoh again refused to let the people go. God then brought a fifth plague upon the land of Egypt, and this was a pestilence, which killed mostly cattle and horses. The Israelites again were not affected by the plague.

As the king still remained obstinate and would not let the people go, God brought a sixth plague upon the Egyptians. Moses and Aaron took each a handful of ashes of the furnace, and Aaron put his handful of ashes into the already filled hand of Moses and no part of it spilled to the ground. Moses then threw the ashes heavenward, and when it returned earthward, it scattered all over the land of Egypt. The small dust of the ashes produced boils upon the skin of the Egyptians. Even the magicians were covered with boils from head to foot, and they were unable to stand before Moses.

This plague over, God told Moses to go to Pharaoh and warn him that He would cause a grievous

hail to descend upon the land, the like of which had never been seen. As Moses was accustomed to meet Pharaoh in the morning on his daily walk along the brink of the Nile, the king gave up his morning walk. Moses therefore sought the king out in his palace in the early hours of the day, and spoke to him thus: "God will cause a terrible hail to come down upon the land, and it will kill whatever is found in the field. Make haste therefore and warn your servants to bring in their shepherds and their cattle from the fields, lest they be killed."

Pharaoh accordingly sent out a warning to all his people. But they did not heed his warning. There were but few who ordered their shepherds to remove the cattle from the fields. The king himself knew well that the hail would come down, as Moses had predicted, but remained unshaken in his obstinacy. God therefore caused a heavy hail-storm to come down upon the land of Egypt.

Said fire to water: "Come, let us make peace for the sake of doing the will of our Creator. Water shall not quench fire, and fire shall not cause the hail to melt." The men as well as the beasts that remained in the field were smitten by the hail, or burnt by the fire. Wheat in the field was destroyed, and trees were broken down by the hail.

The king lost no time, and sent for Moses and Aaron. Upon seeing them, he exclaimed: "Indeed, the Lord is righteous, and my people and I are wicked. Now, pray to God that He take this

plague away from us, and I will let the children of Israel go, as you desire."

Moses thereupon went a short distance out of the city, and there spread out his hands to God and prayed that He stay the hail. No sooner had he finished his prayer than the hail ceased. The hail that was in the air did not come down to the ground, but remained suspended in the air. Part of the suspended hail came down upon the Amorites when Joshua was engaged in battle with them.

As soon as the hail was removed from the land, Pharaoh again refused to let the people go, and Moses at once went to the palace and announced the coming of the eighth plague, the plague of locusts; but the king ordered Moses and Aaron to be expelled from the palace. Then God sent the plague of locusts. These locusts ate every herb in the land, and all the fruit of the trees that had survived the hail, and there remained not a green thing in the whole land.

Again Pharaoh called for Moses and Aaron and said to them: "I have sinned against the Lord your God and against you. Now therefore forgive, I pray you, my sin this once, and entreat the Lord your God that He may remove this plague from our midst." Moses prayed to God on the king's behalf, and the plague was taken away.

Once relieved from this plague, Pharaoh again refused to let the Israelites go, and God caused the

ninth plague to come, the plague of darkness. The darkness was so dense, that the Egyptians were unable to see one another, and could not stir from their place. If they were sitting down they could not rise up, and if they were standing up, they could not sit down.

There were some of the people of Israel, who upon hearing the message of God sent through Moses, said: "Here in the land of Egypt we have become rich, and have plenty to eat and drink. Then why go in search of another land?" Now when darkness covered the land of Egypt, God said: "Because ye were well satisfied with your wealth and cared not for the sufferings of your brethren, ye shall die and be buried in Egypt, unperceived by the Egyptians."

Chapter XXXIV

THE DEPARTURE

1. *Pharaoh Drives the Israelites Out*

WHEN Pharaoh refused to let the people go, God said to Moses: "One plague more will I bring upon the land, and then the king of Egypt will let you go. In the meantime tell the people to borrow from the Egyptians vessels of silver and gold, so that they come out of the land with great riches."

Moses then came to Pharaoh and said: "Behold, you have failed to hearken to the word of God until now; therefore about midnight God will go forth in the land and slay all the first-born of your people." But the heart of the king was hardened again and he would not let the Israelites go.

At midnight all the first-born of the land died. There was not a house in which there was not one dead, and the cry of the Egyptians rose to heaven. The king and his servants rose in the dark of night, and together with Bithia, the foster-mother of Moses, they went to look for Moses and Aaron. When finally Pharaoh reached the door of the house where Moses lived, he called out to Moses and asked him to pray to God for his sake.

"Why have you brought all this evil upon my people and me?" asked Bithia.

"Ten plagues did the Lord bring upon Egypt; did any of these plagues affect you?" inquired Moses.

"None did any harm to me," answered Bithia; "but when I see the evil plight of my father, my brothers and all my people, I do not rejoice in the security I enjoy."

"They would not hearken unto the voice of the Lord," said Moses, "therefore did all this evil come upon them. Let your father but proclaim that the children of Israel are no longer to be considered as his slaves, but the servants of the Lord our God, and you shall all be saved from death."

Immediately Pharaoh replied: "Pray, go forth from out of the land of Egypt, both you and your people and all that belongs to you, as you are now free men, no longer the slaves of Pharaoh. But pray do not tarry."

"Although you are a first-born, you shall not perish," said Moses, "for God preserves your life in order to show you His greatness and His might."

While all the Israelites were busily engaged in acquiring riches, Moses thought of Joseph's coffin. He knew that Israel could not leave Egypt without it, on account of the oath they had taken. For three days and three nights preceding the departure from Egypt, Moses hunted up and down

through the land of Egypt in search of the coffin. But his searching was in vain; the coffin was nowhere to be found.

Finally Serah, the daughter of Asher, met Moses who had become tired and exhausted, and she asked in amazement: "Why this weariness? wherefore this sad look?"

"For three days and three nights I have made a fruitless search for Joseph's coffin," Moses replied. "You, as the only survivor of the house of Jacob, peradventure may know where his coffin is to be found?"

Silently Serah took Moses to the river Nile, and pointing with her finger, said: "In this very spot rests the coffin of Joseph. At the time of his death, the Egyptians, knowing that the Jews could not depart from their land without the bones of Joseph, made a leaden coffin for him, sealed it up on all sides, and sank it in the Nile. The magicians with their arts put it in a place from which it could not be removed."

Thereupon Moses took Joseph's cup, and cut four flat plates out of it. He engraved a lion on one of them, an eagle on the second, a bull on the third, and a human figure on the fourth. He threw the first, with the lion on it, into the river, and said: "Joseph, Joseph, the hour for the redemption of Israel has arrived, the Divine Presence lingers here only for thy sake, the clouds of glory await thy coming. If thou wilt show thy-

self, well and good; if not, then we are released from our oath." But the coffin remained in the depths of the Nile.

Then Moses threw the second plate into the river, the one with the figure of the eagle on it, and repeated the same words, but the coffin remained at the bottom of the Nile. He threw into the water the third plate, bearing the figure of the bull, and called upon Joseph for the third time to come forth, but the coffin failed to rise from the bed of the river. Finally he threw the fourth plate into the river, that with the figure of the human being on it, and requested Joseph to come forth, and this time the coffin rose to the surface of the water. Moses seized it, and with great happiness carried it off.

The Israelites, laden with gold and silver, which God told them to take from the Egyptians as payment, in part at least, for all the work they had done for them, departed from the land of bondage, led by their immortal leaders Moses and Aaron.

2. *Uzza*

When the children of Israel departed from Egypt, Uzza, the angel of the Egyptians, appeared before God and said: "O Lord of the world! I have a claim to make against the nation which Thou hast brought forth out of Egypt."

"State thy claim," ordered God.

"O Lord of the world!" said Uzza, "Thou in

Thy wisdom didst decree that the people of Israel should be held in bondage by my people, the Egyptians, for a period of four hundred years. But they have served the Egyptians only eighty-six years, therefore the time of their deliverance has not yet come. If it be Thy will, give me permission to take them back to Egypt, that they may continue in slavery for the three hundred and fourteen years that are left, and that Thy word may be fulfilled."

"Make thou answer to Uzza's claim," said God to Michael, who had listened to the complaint with anxiety. Thereupon Michael spoke, saying:

"The Lord decreed that the children of Israel serve the Egyptians not because they had sinned against them and deserved punishment therefor, but because their forefather Abraham had spoken unbecomingly in the presence of the Almighty. When God spoke to him saying, 'I am the Lord that brought thee out of the land of the Chaldees, to give thee this land to inherit,' he made answer, 'How shall I know that I shall inherit it?' Then did God say to him, 'Thy seed shall be a stranger in a land that is not theirs! Now the four hundred years of exile have passed, for they had been strangers in lands not belonging to them since the birth of Isaac. Thou therefore hast no right to keep Israel in bondage any longer."

When Uzza heard Michael's words, he made no answer, and the Lord decided in favor of

Michael and decreed that Israel remain no longer in slavery in the land of Egypt.

3. *Pharaoh Pursues the Hebrews*

Pharaoh and his servants were under the impression that the Hebrews would return to the land after a three days' journey. When the three days were over and Pharaoh saw that the Hebrews failed to return, he sent an army headed by his officers with orders to bring them back. Upon reaching the camp of Israel, the officers found them feasting and celebrating.

"By the order of the king of Egypt, whose slaves you have hitherto been, I bid you go back to Egypt, as the three days are over," said the head officer of Pharaoh.

"The Lord our God, who has brought us forth from the land of Egypt," answered Moses, "has commanded us not to return to Egypt, but to go to a land flowing with milk and honey."

The officers of the king ordered their men to attack the Hebrews. In the encounter that ensued most of the king's men fell dead. Those few that were left went back to Egypt and reported to their king that the Hebrews had refused to come back.

Upon receiving this report, the hearts of the king and his men were turned against the Israelites. "We were smitten with plagues, we were forced to let our slaves depart from us, and now we have to sit by and see them get away with our

riches," they all declared. "This is more than we can endure." The king therefore induced the people to make war against the Israelites, saying: "In this war I will not remain secure in the rear, as heretofore, but I will ride at the head of the army; I will take no more of the booty than any one of you, and I will waive the privilege I have of choosing and taking whatever I desire; furthermore all my treasuries will be opened, and all the silver, gold and precious stones they contain will be divided equally among you."

Without waiting for his servants, Pharaoh with his own hand prepared his chariot, and the nobles followed his example. These were soon joined by all the Egyptians with their chariots, greatly outnumbering the Israelites. The army covered in one day the ground which it had taken the Israelites three days to traverse.

The Israelites, on beholding the hosts of Pharaoh approach, were greatly terrified. Before them was the sea, behind them the powerful Egyptian armies, and on both sides the wild beasts of the desert. In their terror, they were unable to agree as to what to do. There were four parties advancing different opinions. The first contended that it would be best for them to seek death by drowning in the sea; the second held that it would be best for them to return to Egypt and let the Egyptians do with them whatever they saw fit; the third was in favor of waging war against the

Egyptians; while the fourth thought it would be advisable to intimidate the Egyptians by setting up a great noise.

To the first party Moses said: "Stand still and see the salvation of the Lord"; to the second he said: "The Egyptians whom you have seen this day you shall never more see again"; to the third: "The Lord will fight for you"; and to the fourth: "You shall hold your peace."

"What, then, shall we do?" the spokesmen of these parties asked their leader.

"You shall bless, praise and glorify Him that is the Lord of war," answered the leader.

Instead of making use of their weapons of war, the Israelites prayed to God, thus obeying the words of their forefather Jacob, that it is unbecoming for the sons of Israel to fight with sword and bow, but that prayer shall be their sword, and supplication, their bow. And the Lord hearkened unto their prayer, and determined to save them.

4. *The Red Sea Is Divided*

Moses, too, implored God to save his people from this desperate situation.

"Moses," said God, "My children are in distress, the sea blocks the way before them, and the enemy is right behind them, and thou standest here and prayest. If for the sake of a single human being, Adam, I ordered that the waters upon the face of the earth be gathered into one

place, shall I not do the same for this holy people? My children's prayer preceded thine, now there is nothing left for thee to do but to lift up thy rod, stretch thy hand over the sea, and divide it."

In the meantime the cloud of glory which preceded the children of Israel on their journey in order to illumine the road for them in the desert, descended and placed itself between the Israelites and the Egyptians, forming a partition between them. This cloud cast rays of light upon the camp of the Hebrews, while the armies of Pharaoh it veiled in darkness.

Moses ordered the Israelites to draw nearer the shore, and, stretching out his rod over the sea, said: "I am the messenger sent by the Creator of the world! Uncover thy paths, O sea, for His children, that they may go through thy midst on dry ground."

"I will not do thy bidding," answered the sea, "for thou art only a man born of woman, and, besides, I am three days older than thou, O man, for I was created on the third day of the Creation, and thou on the sixth."

"O God," exclaimed Moses, "the sea refuses to do Thy will."

"What does a master do with a disobedient servant?" inquired God.

"He beats him with a rod," said Moses.

"Do thus!" ordered God. "Lift up thy rod, and stretch out thy hand over the sea, and divide it."

Moses raised his rod—the rod which had been created at the beginning of the world, upon which was engraven the great Name, and with which he had wrought the miracles in the land of Egypt—and stretched his hand over the sea, but the sea remained obdurate.

When, however, the sea beheld God in His glory at the right hand of Moses, it spoke to the earth, saying: "Make hollow places for me, that I may hide myself therein before the Lord of all created things, blessed be He!" The earth obeyed, and the waters of the Red Sea divided to let Israel pass on dry ground. Twelve paths were opened up in the sea, one for each of the tribes. The water became as transparent as glass, and each tribe could see the others.

5. *In the Red Sea*

On approaching the sea, the Israelites saw that the ground was not yet dry. The tribe of Reuben, on beholding the clay at the bottom of the sea, protested and said to the children of Simon: "While in Egypt our lives were made miserable with clay, and now Moses has brought us here that we may sink in this fearful clay. We refuse to enter." The tribe of Simon agreed with the Reubenites, and likewise decided not to follow Moses into the sea.

While most of the people were thus complaining, the sons of Benjamin jumped into the Red

Sea, followed by the tribe of Judah. "I will reward these two tribes for their faith in Me," said God. "I will cause My holy Temple to be built in Benjamin's portion of the holy land, and from Judah kings shall come forth."

Thus the Israelites passed through the Red Sea in safety, while the waters of the sea rose like walls on both sides of them. God also caused all kinds of dainty fruit to grow out of the sea, and if a child cried while it lay in the arms of its mother, all she needed was to stretch out her hand and pluck any kind of fruit she desired and quiet the child with it.

In the meantime the armies of Pharaoh were steadily approaching the Red Sea. They were still undecided as to what to do with the Israelites. Some of them said that it would be enough merely to take away from the Israelites all the gold and silver they had, while others insisted also on killing them all. But without hesitation, they followed the children of Israel into the sea.

6. *The Egyptians Are Drowned*

God in His glory appeared on the scene and desired to drown the Egyptians, but Uzza, the Angel of the Egyptians, drew near and said: "O Lord of the world! Thou art called just and upright; why then dost Thou desire to make my children perish in the sea? Have my children drowned or slain a single one of Thy children? If

it be on account of the rigorous slavery that my children imposed upon Israel, then consider that Thy children have received their wages, in that they took the silver and golden vessels from them."

God then summoned all the angels, and said: Judge ye in truth between Me and yonder Uzza, the Angel of the Egyptians. In bygone days I brought famine upon his people, and My beloved Joseph, through his wisdom, saved them from destruction, and they all became his slaves. But when My children came into their land as strangers, they were in turn made slaves by the Egyptians. My children groaned under their heavy yoke, and I sent Moses and Aaron, My faithful messengers to Pharaoh, to save them. When they spoke to him in My name, he refused to listen to them. I punished him, but he remained obstinate and he made the yoke of the children of Israel still heavier and their lives more bitter. Now when I redeemed My children from his heavy yoke, he seeks to destroy them."

When God had finished speaking, the heavenly judges called out: "Thou, O Lord, art just in all Thy ways, Pharaoh and his host deserve the punishment Thou metest out to them."

Uzza heard their verdict, and he pleaded: "O Lord of all the worlds! My people deserve the punishment, but be Thou merciful and have pity upon the works of Thy hand."

In an instant, Angel Michael flew to Egypt,

fetched a piece of a wall in which a Hebrew child had been put in place of mortar, and standing with it in the presence of God, said: "O Lord of the world! Wilt Thou have pity upon this people, who killed innocent children so cruelly?" This silenced Uzza, and God resolved to drown the Egyptians in the sea.

The waters of the sea instantly began surging back, and the Egyptians were drowned. This happened at that hour of the morning when the holy hosts of heaven were wont to sing praises to the Almighty. They now gathered in great multitudes and were about to sing, when God silenced them with the following words: "The works of My hand are drowning in the sea, and ye desire to sing praises unto Me?"

God caused the Egyptians to be washed ashore, so that the Israelites might not say that the Egyptians were likewise saved from drowning. Throwing out the corpses, the sea said to the earth: "Take thy children to thyself, for I do not want them to pollute my waters."

"I still remember the curse pronounced upon me for having received the blood of a single person Abel; how much severer will be my punishment for drinking in the blood of so many slain people," replied the earth. "Therefore, O sea, keep within thee all those whom thou hast slain."

"I shall not punish thee for receiving the Egyptians," said God to the earth. Thereupon the

earth opened and buried all the corpses that lay beside the sea.

7. *The Great Booty*

When Moses and Israel beheld the Egyptians dead upon the sea-shore, they prepared to sing praises to the Lord. All the angels in heaven, too, were about to sing praises to God for having delivered His chosen people from the land of bondage. But God bade them wait, saying: "Let my children sing first."

All the children of Israel raised their eyes heavenward and began to sing praises to God. Infants as yet unable to speak opened their mouths and joined in the song; even babes stopped sucking their mothers' breasts and joined in the melody. Thus there was not one soul in Israel who did not offer praise to God for the great deliverance. All in the camp of Israel were permitted to behold the glory of God; yea, even the female slaves in Israel were allowed to see more of the Presence of God at the dividing of the Red Sea than the Prophet Ezekiel was ever permitted to behold.

The sea cast up many jewels, precious stones and other treasures which had ornamented the Egyptian warriors and their horses, and the Israelites thus acquired great wealth. When Moses told them that it was time to march forward and begin their journey to the promised land, the Israelites were loath to leave the spot. Moses rebuked

The waters of the sea surged back, and the Egyptians were drowned

them: "Think you the sea will forever continue to yield you jewels and pearls?" Thereupon the Israelites, without complaint or murmur, followed their great leader into the wilderness.

CHAPTER XXXV

THE ISRAELITES IN THE WILDERNESS

1. *The Terrible Desert*

UNDER the leadership of Moses, the Israelites marched toward the wilderness of Shur, a horrible and dreadful desert extending for hundreds of miles, and full of deadly lizards and snakes. In spite of all this, the Israelites followed their godly leaders, without offering the slightest protest. They were therefore rewarded by their heavenly Father for their trust in Him, for no Israelite was ever harmed by the poisonous snakes during the journey in the desert. The snakes did not even inspire fear, for whenever one of them beheld an Israelite, it would remain lying meekly on the sand.

For three days the Israelites marched without complaining, but then their supply of water gave out. They reached a certain place called Marah where a well of water was found, but the water was very bitter and the people could not drink of it. They murmured against Moses, saying: "What shall we drink?" Moses at once prayed to God.

God bade Moses take a twig from a bitter laurel tree and cast it into the well, whereupon the water became sweet.

The people were astonished at the great miracle performed for them, and marveled that bitter water should be made sweet and drinkable by means of a twig from a bitter laurel tree. They regretted their lack of faith in God, and Moses prayed to God for their forgiveness, which was granted.

From Marah the Israelites marched on to Elim. There they found seventy palm trees and twelve wells of water. At the very creation of the world, God had planted at Elim the seventy palm trees to correspond to the seventy elders of Israel, and He made the twelve wells there, to correspond to the number of Israelitish tribes.

2. *The Heavenly Food*

Thirty-one days passed from the time the Israelites had left Egypt, and the provisions which they had taken with them had already become exhausted. They became greatly worried about their food supply. "For who," thought they, "will supply us with food in the barren wilderness that lies ahead of us?" The whole people murmured against Moses, saying: "He promised us freedom and happiness, and now he has taken us out of an inhabited land, a land of plenty, and led us into a deadly desert, to torture us with famine. Would

to God we had died by the hand of the Lord during the three days of darkness in the land of Egypt, when we sat by the flesh-pots, and when we ate our fill of bread."

God said to Moses: "I will cause bread to rain for them, from My stores in heaven, and the people shall go out and gather a certain portion every day." During the night God caused manna, "the bread of the angels," to rain down for them. This food had been created by God on the second day of the Creation, and had been prepared by the angels; now it descended for the wanderers in the wilderness.

Before the manna descended, a very strong north wind came and swept away all the dust found around the camp of Israel; then a very strong rain came down and washed the ground quite clean; and finally dew settled upon it. The dew became congealed by the north wind, so that it glistened and sparkled like gold, and formed tables upon which the manna afterward came down. After the manna had descended, another layer of frozen dew covered the food, so that neither dust nor insects might accumulate upon it.

The manna that came down from heaven possessed magic properties. It required no cooking, no baking and no preparation whatever, and it contained the flavor of every conceivable dish. One had only to wish for a certain dish, and the manna tasted like that dish. The same manna had

a different taste for every one who ate it; to the little children it tasted like milk; to the strong youths, like bread; to the aged, like honey, and to the sick, like barley steeped in oil and honey; and on the Sabbath the flavor was enriched a thousand-fold.

The people had very little trouble gathering their daily rations of manna, for it required little or no work at all. One that was not prone to do any work would walk out during the fall of manna and have it drop directly into his hands. And for those who were very lazy and would not get out of their beds, manna would fall into the tents, so that they could stretch out their hands and receive it. The manna remained on the ground daily for two hours, then it melted like snow, and flowed away in streams like water. When the heathens attempted to drink from it, it became very bitter. But when they caught a deer, that had drunk from the streams, and slaughtered it, they found that the meat had a flavor similar to that of manna, and they would then exclaim: "Happy is the lot of this people!"

Although manna would fall in tremendous heaps, yet no person could gather from it more than was required for the daily needs of his family, and to each and every person was miraculously allotted an equal portion of it.

One day it happened that two Israelites came before Moses. One of them complained that the

other had stolen his slave. The other denied the charge. Moses then said to them: "Come to me this evening and I will give you my decision." Then Moses visited the tents of the two men, counted the number of persons in each family and the number of manna rations that each family had gathered. When he found that the slave's ration of manna was found in the house of the complainant, he said to the other: "Return the slave to his rightful owner."

3. *Miriam's Well*

When the Israelites reached Rephidim, there was again no water for them to drink, and as on the previous occasion they came to Moses and demanded water. They even threatened to stone him. In answer to the prayer of Moses, God told him to take with him some of the elders of Israel, to go to the rocks of Horeb and fetch water from there.

Moses, accompanied by the elders and followed by the entire camp of Israel, reached the rocks of Horeb. God told him to strike any rock with his staff and water would come out. Moses asked the people to select the rock from which water should flow. They chose one and Moses had hardly touched it with his rod, when water in plenty began to gush forth from it.

At that time there was revealed to them a well of water flowing from a rock which accompanied

them all the forty years of their wanderings through the wilderness. God performed this great miracle for them for the sake of the prophetess Miriam, and therefore it was known as "Miriam's Well."

Miriam's Well, which had been created by God on the second day of the Creation, had the shape of a sieve-like rock, out of which water gushed forth. It followed the Israelites in all their wanderings, over hill and dale, and wherever they halted, it halted, too, and settled opposite the Tabernacle. The leaders of the twelve tribes then appeared and chanted these words to the well: "Spring up, O well; let us sing unto it, for nobles of the people dug it out with their staves at the direction of our lawgiver." Thereupon the well caused pillars of water to shoot up high into the air.

4. *The War with Amalek*

Eliphaz, the son of Esau, had a son named Amalek. When he became aware of Israel's departure from Egypt, Amalak longed to execute the desire of his grandfather to annihilate all the Israelites. He invited all the heathen nations to take part in the attack upon them. These, however, refused to make war upon Israel, because they feared lest they fare like the Egyptians. Amalek, angered at the refusal of the heathen nations, took the field alone against Israel and marched upon

them with his army from his settlement at Seir, which was no less than four hundred parasangs away from the camp of Israel.

When Moses noticed the army of Amalek approaching the camp, he called Joshua, his disciple, and said to him: "Choose warriors from the people and go out, fight against the Amalekites." Joshua at once executed his master's bidding, and with the army he had mustered he went out to meet Amalek in war. While the battle raged between Israel and Amalek, Moses, accompanied by Aaron and Hur, stationed himself on a hill and invoked God's aid. As Moses prayed, he raised his hands heavenward, and it so happened that whenever Moses lifted his hands, Israel was victorious, but whenever he let down his hands, Amalek prevailed.

"Now, let us prepare a soft and comfortable seat for you," said Aaron and Hur to Moses, "so that you may sit down, and we may support your hands in an upward position."

"So long as Israel is in distress," answered Moses, "I will share it with them. Fetch me a rock that I may sit on it." Thus he seated himself upon a rock and Aaron and Hur held up his arms and assisted him in his prayer.

When the sun was about to set, the battle was still undecided. Moses prayed to God that He might stay the setting of the sun and thus enable Israel to gain a victory. God granted his prayer,

for the sun did not set until the Israelites had completely vanquished their enemy.

5. *Jethro*

Jethro, the father-in-law of Moses, heard of the defeat of Amalek, and decided to bring the wife of Moses and his two sons to him. He could not enter the camp of Israel when he reached it, because it was enveloped in a cloud which no man could penetrate. He therefore wrote a letter to Moses, which read: "I adjure you, by your two sons and by your God, to come out to meet me. If you will not do it for my sake, do it for your wife's sake, and if you will not do it for her sake, do it for the sake of your two sons." He shot the letter off with an arrow, and it fell into the camp.

God immediately appeared to Moses and said to him: "Go out to meet this man and receive him kindly, for he desires to become a member of My people, therefore do not repulse him."

Moses, accompanied by Aaron, Nadab, Abihu and all the elders of Israel, hastened to welcome Jethro. He offered Jethro the greeting of peace, and then related to him all the miracles that God had performed for the sake of His people. Jethro heard all this and decided to become an Israelite. He burst into a song of praise to God for the deeds He had done for His people.

Shortly afterwards Jethro saw that Moses sat like a king upon his throne and that the people

came from all quarters to him to have him decide points of law disputes.

"Why do you sit while all the people stand?" asked Jethro.

"Because they come to inquire of me about God," answered Moses. "They stand up not in my honor but in honor of God, whose judgment they would know."

Chapter XXXVI

THE GIVING OF THE LAW

1. *Before the Revelation*

THREE months had elapsed from the time the Israelites had left Egypt, and now God thought that He would give them the Torah. Before He gave the Torah to Israel, He had offered it to every tribe and nation on the earth, so that hereafter they might not excuse themselves by saying: "Had the Holy One, blessed be He, preferred to give the Torah to us, we should have accepted it." He went to the children of Esau and said: "Will ye accept the Torah?"

"What is written in the Torah?" they asked.

"Thou shalt not kill, is one of its commandments," replied God.

"Almighty God," they said, "dost Thou desire to take from us the blessing which was given our father Esau? For he was blessed with the words, 'By thy sword shalt thou live.' We do not want to accept the Torah."

Thereupon He went to the children of Ishmael and said to them: "Will ye accept the Torah?"

"What is written therein?" the Ishmaelites asked.

"Thou shalt not steal, is one of its commandments," said God.

"We cannot accept the Torah," they said, "because our father was blessed thus: 'His hand will be against every man.' "

God then went to all the other nations and all of them rejected the Torah because the commandments found in it were contrary to their own customs. He then went to the children of Israel and said to them: "Will you accept the Torah?"

"What is written therein?" they asked.

"The Torah contains six hundred and thirteen commandments," said God.

"All that the Lord has spoken we shall do and obey," they all said as one man.

When it became known to the mountains that God intended to deliver the Torah from the top of one of them, they fought for the honor of being chosen as the spot upon which the glory of God would reveal itself. One mountain said: "Upon me shall the Holy One give His Torah to Israel." Whereupon another mountain said: "Upon me shall the Holy One give the Torah to Israel."

"Upon me shall God descend," said Mount Tabor to Mount Hermon, "because I am the highest of all, and when the flood in the time of Noah covered all the high places, I towered above the waters."

"Nay, upon me shall God descend," replied Mount Hermon, "because when the Children of

Israel wished to cross the Red Sea, I placed myself between the two shores, and enabled them to cross."

Mount Carmel said nothing, but thought that God would surely descend upon him.

"In vain do ye quarrel," rang out a voice from the high heavens, "the Divine Presence shall not rest upon any of the high mountains, who are so proud, and upon whom the heathen erect sanctuaries for their idols. I prefer Mount Sinai, the most humble of all, upon which no sanctuaries have been built by idolaters."

2. *The Pledge*

On the second day of the third month, God told Moses: "Go and acquaint the women of Israel with the laws of my Torah, and try with kindly words to persuade them to accept the Torah, so that they may help their husbands raise their children in the ways of the Torah. After that explain the contents of the Torah to the men, and with them Thou shalt speak solemn words concerning it."

Moses repeated the words of God to the people, and they said that they were willing to do whatever God commanded them. But God still hesitated to give the Torah to the children of Israel, and he said to them: "Bring Me bondsmen by whom ye will bind yourselves to observe it, and I will give you the Torah."

"Our ancestors, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, will be our bondsmen," said the Israelites.

"Your ancestors are not good bondsmen," answered God; "for Abraham said, 'Whereby shall I know that I will inherit the land?' and he did not have faith in My word. Isaac loved his son Esau, whom I hated. Jacob, when in distress said, 'My way is hidden from the Lord.' Bring good bondsmen, and I will give you the Torah."

"Then let our prophets be our bondsmen," said the Israelites.

"I object to them," said God, "for your prophets become like foxes in the desert. Bring Me good bondsmen, and I will give you the Torah."

"We will give you our children as bondsmen," said the Israelites.

"These are good bondsmen," said God; "on their bond I will give you the Torah."

The Israelites thereupon brought their wives and their babes with them to Mount Sinai, so that the little ones might become surety for the adults that they would observe the Torah.

3. *The Revelation*

On the day of the Revelation, flashes of lightning and peals of thunder filled the people with fear and trembling. There were fire and earthquake, storm and hail. The kings of the earth trembled in their palaces, and they came to the villainous Balaam and asked: "Does God intend

for us the same fate as that of the generation of the flood?"

"Oh, you fools!" said Balaam; "the Holy One, blessed be He, has long promised Noah never again to punish the world with a flood."

"Perhaps He now means to destroy the world by means of fire," said the frightened kings.

"Nay, God will not destroy the world with fire," said Balaam; "God is about to give His Torah to His chosen people, hence all this disturbance in nature."

"May the Eternal bless His people with peace," they all said, and each of them returned to his palace.

At noon, when all the Israelites had assembled, the men in one division, the women in another, God revealed Himself before the people. He lifted up the mountain and holding it over the heads of the people like a basket, said to them: "If ye will accept the Torah, it shall be well with you, otherwise ye shall all find your graves under the mountain." They all burst into tears, and again they declared: "All that the Lord has said, we will do and obey." Immediately a host of one hundred and twenty myriad angels descended from heaven, and provided every Israelite with a crown and a girdle of glory.

When God was about to utter the first word, nature stood still: the birds ceased their singing, wings became motionless, the billows of the sea

were suddenly calmed, the streams stopped flowing, the angels stopped singing hymns, there was nothing but silence, both in heaven and on earth. The voice of God was then heard saying: "I am the Lord thy God." Immediately the seven heavens and the seven earths were opened that they might serve as witnesses to the Israelites that there is none like God either in the heavens above or on the earths below. These words uttered by God Himself were heard not only by the Israelites, but by all the nations of the earth.

When the Israelites heard the voice of God, they were flung back twelve miles, and their souls fled from them. The Torah then presented itself before God, and said: "Lord of the world, hast thou given the Torah to the living or to the dead?"

"To the living," said God.

"But they are all dead," complained the Torah.

"For thy sake," said God, "I will restore them to life again." He thereupon let fall upon them the dew that will revive the dead in the time of the Messiah, and they returned to life.

4. *Moses in Heaven*

Israel heard the Ten Commandments spoken by God Himself on Mount Sinai, and they thought that God would on this occasion give them all the commandments of the Torah. But they were so much awed by the events of the day that they cared not to hear any more laws uttered by the

Almighty Himself. They therefore approached Moses and said to him: "Pray, be you the intermediator between God and us, lest we all die."

God acknowledged that their demand was just, and He said to Moses: "Go, say to them, 'Return you all to your tents,' but stay thou with Me."

When this day, the most important in human history, drew to a close, Moses ascended the holy mountain. A cloud appeared and lay down before him, but he did not know whether to hold fast to it, or to ride upon it. Then suddenly the cloud divided into two parts. Moses entered between them, and was carried away by the cloud.

Reaching heaven he found Kemuel, the angel who is in charge of twelve thousand angels of destruction, posted at the gate of heaven. He spoke to Moses harshly: "Son of Amram, how comest thou to be here, in this place, which belongs to angels of fire?"

"I come here with the permission of the Holy One to receive the Torah and bring it down to Israel," replied Moses. Kemuel still refused to let him pass, but Moses pronounced the Holy Name, and thereby cast Kemuel forth a distance of thirteen thousand parasangs.

Thereupon the cloud carried him farther on until he reached the angel Hadarniel, who shoots out twelve thousand flashes of lightning from his mouth at every word he utters. When he beheld Moses, he roared at him: "Son of Amram, how

comest thou to be here in the abode of the Holy and High?" Moses became greatly frightened, and he was unable to utter a single word. Suddenly he heard a voice saying to him: "When I appeared unto thee in the bush, thou didst speak to Me freely; now thou art afraid of but one of the angels that minister unto Me." Moses, encouraged by the word of God, pronounced the Holy Name. Hadarniel then ran before Moses, like a disciple before his master, until he reached the fire of Sandalfon. Hadarniel then said to Moses: "I can proceed no further, lest the fire of Sandalfon consume me."

When Moses beheld Sandalfon, he was frightened, and in his alarm he almost fell out of the cloud. With tears in his eyes he prayed to God for mercy, and God Himself descended from the throne of Divine Majesty and stood before Moses until he had passed the flames of Sandalfon.

Finally he came to the host of angels that surround the throne of Divine Majesty. These wanted to scorch Moses with their fiery breath, but God said to Moses: "Hold tightly to the throne of Divine Majesty and argue with them." For as soon as the angels became aware of the fact that Moses had come to heaven, they said to God: "What does he, who is born of woman, here?"

"He has come to receive the Torah," God replied.

"Why give it to the creatures of dust?" they

pleaded. "Why not give it to the angels in heaven?"

Moses thereupon answered the angels: "It is written in the Torah: 'I am the Lord thy God, that have led thee out of Egypt and out of the house of bondage.' Were ye enslaved in Egypt and then delivered, that ye are in need of the Torah? It is further written in the Torah: 'Thou shalt have no other gods before me.' Are there then any idolaters among you that ye are in need of the Torah? It is written: 'Honor thy father and thy mother.' Have ye then parents that ye are in need of the Torah? It is written: 'Thou shalt not kill'; 'thou shalt not steal.' Are there any murderers among you, or is there perchance any money in heaven that can be stolen, that you are in need of the Torah?" The angels thereupon withdrew their opposition, and acknowledged that the Torah should be given to the inhabitants of the earth, saying: "Eternal, Our Lord, how excellent is Thy name in all the earth! Thou hast set Thy glory upon the heavens."

5. *Moses Receives the Torah*

In the presence of God, Moses beheld the Torah which was written in black fire upon white fire. God was occupied in ornamenting the letters of the Torah with little crown-like decorations.

"What is the significance of the crowns upon the letters?" Moses asked of God.

"In time to come, there will live a man," replied God, "who in his wisdom will base many laws upon his interpretation of these dots upon the letters."

"If it please Thee, O Lord, show me this man," prayed Moses.

"Go back eighteen ranks," said God, "and thou shalt behold the man."

Moses went where he was told to go, and there he heard the discussions between a teacher and the many disciples who were sitting around him; but Moses was unable to follow those discussions, and this grieved him greatly. Just then he heard the disciples questioning their master: "How do you know this to be the law?" And the master answered: "This is a law given to Moses on Mount Sinai." Thereupon Moses was satisfied and pleased.

Moses returned to God and said: "Thou hast a man like Rabbi Akiba, and yet Thou dost give the Torah through me!"

"Peace," said God, "so it has been decreed by Me."

"O Lord," said Moses, "Thou hast permitted me to see the man's learning, pray let me also see the reward which is meted out to him."

"Go, return and see," said God.

Moses turned around and saw them sell the flesh of the martyr Akiba at the meat market. "Is this the reward for such learning?" asked Moses.

"Be silent, thus have I decreed," replied God.

Moses then saw God write the word "long-suffering" in the Torah, and he asked: "Does this mean that Thou art long-suffering with the righteous?"

"Nay, with sinners also am I long-suffering," answered God.

"What!" exclaimed Moses, "with sinners? Let them perish!"

"There will come a time when thou wilt withdraw thy objection," said God.

During the forty days that Moses stayed in heaven, God taught him the written law and the oral teachings, which were expounded in later generations by the Talmudists. God then bestowed the Torah upon Moses, who was ready to descend to Israel.

Satan then appeared before the Lord and said: "Where is the place where the Torah is kept?"

"I gave the Torah to the Earth," God said.

Satan immediately betook himself to the Earth, and asked: "Where is the Torah, O Earth?"

"Only God knows its abiding-place," answered the Earth.

Satan now passed on to the Sea and said: "Where is the Torah, O Sea?"

"It is not with me," said the Sea. He then went to the Abyss, but the Abyss also said: "It is not with me."

Satan next went to Destruction and Death, and

said: "Do you know where the Torah can be found?"

"We have heard the fame thereof with our ears," answered Death and Destruction, "but we know not where it is."

Satan returned to God and said: "O Lord of the world! Everywhere have I sought for the Torah, but have found it not."

"Go, seek the son of Amram," God replied.

Satan now hastened to Moses, and asked him: "Where is the Torah that God hath given thee?"

"Who am I, that the Holy One, blessed be He, should have given me the Torah?" answered Moses.

"O Moses, thou speakest falsehood," said God.

"O Lord of the world!" Moses answered. "Thou hast in Thy possession a hidden treasure which daily delights Thee. Dare I declare it my possession?"

"Thou art humble," said God. "As a reward for thy humility, the Torah shall henceforth be known as the Law of Moses."

Moses then departed from heaven with two tablets upon which the Ten Commandments were engraved. These tablets were created by God's own hand in the dusk of the first Sabbath at the close of the Creation, and were made of sapphire-like stone.

Chapter XXXVII

THE CRIME

1. *The Golden Calf*

AT noon of the fortieth day, when Moses was supposed to have come from heaven with the Torah, Satan came to the Israelites and said to them: "Where is Moses, the son of Amram?"

"Moses went up to heaven to receive the Torah," they replied.

"But the time for his return has already passed," said Satan, "and yet he has not returned. Know, therefore, that Moses, your leader, is dead. And if you doubt my statement, raise your eyes to heaven and see." So saying, Satan caused a vision to appear to the people. They saw a heavy cloud and in the cloud a black bier that floated midway between heaven and earth, and upon it Moses seemed to be lying dead. Pointing to it with their fingers, they cried: "This is the man Moses that has brought us out of the land of Egypt."

Under the leadership of two magicians, Jannes and Jambres, the Israelites appeared before Aaron and said to him: "Our leader Moses will return

no more, and now we desire that you make us a god like that of the Egyptians, so that we may be able to carry our god with us wherever we go." Aaron and Hur, the son of Miriam, assured the people that Moses would soon return, but the Israelites would not listen. Hur then said to them: "O you frivolous people, are you no longer mindful of the miracles God has wrought for you?" The people, in their rage, set upon the good and noble Hur and killed him. They then came to Aaron again and said to him: "You must make a god for us."

Aaron desired to delay the affair as long as possible, for he expected Moses to come down soon. He therefore said to them: "Bring the ornaments of your wives, your sons and daughters, and I will make a god for you." Aaron knew that the women would not part with their ornaments so readily, and therefore thought that in this way he would bring the whole affair to nought. But to his great disappointment, the men took off their own earrings and other ornaments and gave them to Aaron, for their wives had indeed refused to give up their golden ornaments.

Aaron cast the gold into the fire, thinking that nothing would come out except a mass of gold. But to his great surprise and grief, a living calf came out which danced about to and fro. For the two magicians, with their secret arts, had caused a living calf to come out. When the mixed multi-

tude that had joined Israel in their exodus from Egypt saw this idol behaving like a living creature, they said to the Israelites: "This is thy God, O Israel."

2. *Moses Breaks the Tablets*

When the people of Israel made the golden calf and bowed to it, Moses was still in heaven, and God said to him: "Only for the sake of Israel have I made thee great and distinguished thee from all human beings, but now that Israel has become disloyal to Me, I have no further reason to bestow such greatness upon thee; therefore, do thou go down now, because thy people have become corrupt."

"O Lord of the world!" Moses answered, "not long since when Thou sentest me to Pharaoh Thou saidst to me: 'Go and bring forth *My* people from the land of Egypt'; and now Thou sayest to me: '*Thy* people have become corrupt.' Nay, they are Thy people, whether righteous or sinful."

"Let Me alone," said God, "that My wrath may wax hot against them, and that I may consume them; and I will make of thee a great nation."

"I will not move away from this place," said Moses, "until Thou dost forgive the sin of this people. Now, pray tell me what have they done to move Thee thus to anger?"

"They have made them a molten calf," said God, "and they have worshiped it and say: 'This

is our god that brought us out of the land of Egypt.' "

This grieved Moses greatly. He fell upon his face, and began to beseech God thus: "Thou O Lord, didst say to Abraham: 'If I will find in Sodom only ten righteous men, I will spare the whole place for their sake,' and now thou desirest to destroy all Israel and not spare them even for the sake of eighty good men that are found among them."

Moses saw that God was determined to destroy Israel, and made one last attempt to win mercy for his people. Turning to God he said: "Pray forgive this people for having made the idol; take the calf into heaven that it may assist Thee."

"What can the idol do, if I take it to heaven?" inquired God.

"Thou, O Lord, wilt send down the rain, and he will send down the dew. Thou wilt cause the wind and he will bring a cloud upon the earth," said Moses.

"Moses, art thou mistaken like them," asked God, "and knowest not that the idol can do absolutely nothing?"

"If so," said Moses, "why art Thou angry with the people for having made that which is nothing?" Thereupon God withdrew his decree concerning the people of Israel.

When Moses was about to descend from heaven, the angels, noticing that God had diminished the

light which He at first had given to Moses, approached him and threatened to consume him with their fire. Moses, in his terror, forgot all that he had learned from God during his forty days' stay in heaven. He prayed to God and God ordered the angel Yephephiyah, the Master of the Torah, to deliver the Torah to Moses His servant. When the angel had done God's bidding, all the angels of heaven surrounded Moses, and disclosed to him many great and deep secrets that lay hidden in the Torah. The Angel of Death also approached Moses, and disclosed to him the secret by means of which a pestilence of death may be stopped.

Now the tablets that were in the hands of Moses grew very heavy as he descended the mountain. Moses, surprised at this, looked at the tablets and, behold! the letters that had been engraved by God's own finger were vanishing from the tablets one by one, until not one of them remained. Thereupon Moses hurled down the tablets and they broke to pieces at the foot of the mountain.

3. *The Second Tablets*

Moses was wroth with the people for the great sin they had committed and he decided to have nothing to do with them. He therefore moved his tent a mile away from the camp, and whenever the people sought the Lord, they went out to Moses' tent. God was not pleased to see Moses

keep himself aloof from the people, and He said to Moses: "What is to become of this people if we both are angry with them? Return, therefore, to the camp and remain with the people."

"I beseech Thee," implored Moses, "to return to the people, and guide them Thyself to the promised land."

"I have told thee," said God, "that I shall send an angel before them to lead them."

Moses was not satisfied with God's answer and again for forty days and forty nights he sojourned in heaven and implored God to restore Israel into His favor. At last God granted his prayer, forgave the Israelites their sin, and promised to lead Israel Himself.

Encouraged by this, Moses besought God to show him His ways, and God said to him: "Open thine eyes and see." When Moses looked, he saw great gates of light and happiness open, and he asked: "For whom are these intended?"

"These are for those that study My Torah," answered God.

Then the treasures of salvation and comfort were disclosed, and Moses again asked: "For whom are these treasures?"

"These treasures," God replied, "are for those who confide in Me at the time of their distress."

Then the treasure of crowns was shown to Moses, and on every crown God's own finger had engraved the words, "Good name."

"For whom are these crowns intended?" Moses asked.

"These crowns are for those who give alms, bring up orphans, and pity the poor," replied God.

At last a treasure of very large dimensions was revealed, and Moses asked: "For whom is this treasure?"

God replied: "This treasure is Mine own. Out of this treasure I give rewards to those who are not worthy, for I am gracious to those who do not deserve it, and I am bountiful to those who do not merit My bounty."

Moses had been greatly worried about the tablets which he had broken, and God said to him: "There is a diamond quarry from which you may carve tablets on which I will write the words that were written on the first tablets." Moses procured the tablets, and God wrote thereon as He had promised. During the forty days that Moses stayed in heaven, he received not only the two tablets, but also all of the unwritten law, the law that was handed down orally from one generation to the other.

When Moses had completed writing the Torah, in accordance with God's command, a little of the heavenly ink with which he had written the Torah remained on the pen. He wiped the pen on the hair of his forehead, and suddenly his forehead began to radiate beams of light. The people

saw the beams of light radiating from his forehead and feared to approach him, but Moses reassured them, and began to instruct them in the word of God.

Chapter XXXVIII

THE TABERNACLE. THE ELDERS

1. *Bezalel*

GOD one day said unto Moses: "My people have sinned in making the golden calf, let them now pay a fine for their sin." Moses trembled when he heard this. "For," thought he, "how can there be found enough money among the people to pay such a heavy fine." But God who knew his thought said to Moses: "I do not ask of them to pay a high fine; all that I ask of them is this," and thereupon He showed Moses a fiery half shekel.

On the day of Atonement God said to Moses: "Let them make Me a sanctuary that I may dwell among them; not because I lack a dwelling, for even before I had called the world into existence, I had erected My Temple in the heavens. But as a token of My affection for them, and to show all the nations of the earth that I forgive the children of Israel their sin in that they worshiped a golden calf, I will leave My heavenly Temple and dwell among the people of Israel."

Moses was greatly terrified when he heard God's command for he knew not how to construct

the Tabernacle nor the holy vessels. God thereupon showed Moses fiery models of the Tabernacle and of all the holy vessels that it was to contain.

"Who is the man destined to perform the holy mission of building Thy dwelling on earth?" asked Moses.

God laid before Moses the book of Adam and said: "Herein you will find the name of the person designated by Me to build the Tabernacle."

In this book Moses found recorded the names of all the kings, leaders and prophets, each set down according to his generation. He also found the name of Bezalel (meaning in the shadow of God) as the one appointed to the task of building the Tabernacle.

Moses then went to Bezalel and said to him: "God has commanded me that I build a Tabernacle for Him."

"What is the purpose of this Tabernacle?" Bezalel asked.

Moses replied: "Its purpose is to let the Presence of God dwell therein, and to teach there the Torah to His people Israel."

"Where will you keep the Torah?" Bezalel asked again.

"As soon as the Tabernacle shall have been completed," replied Moses, "we shall make the Ark for keeping the Torah."

"Oh, master," said Bezalel, "it were an offense

against the dignity of the Torah to let it meanwhile lie around like this. Let us rather make the Ark first, put the Torah into it, and then proceed to the erection of the Tabernacle."

Moses admitted that Bezalel was right in his argument, and Bezalel set to work upon the construction of the Ark.

2. *A Fire from Heaven*

When the Tabernacle was completed, Moses desired to give the people an exact accounting of all the gold and other valuable articles he had received from them for the purpose of building it. He therefore called together all the people of Israel, and gave them a detailed account of all the gold, silver, precious stones, and all other valuable articles he had obtained, and then showed where and how they had been used for the Tabernacle. He, however, had forgotten to include one item in the accounting, and as a result he could not show what he had done with seventeen hundred and seventy-five shekels. Moses was greatly grieved by this, for he knew that there were many fault-finders among the people.

Moses went over the works of the Tabernacle again and finally found that he had omitted an item of seventeen hundred and seventy-five shekels used for the hooks upon which the curtains of the Tabernacle were to hang. He then returned to the people and said: "See, I have omitted this

item from my inventory. Now take the hooks and have them weighed, and you will be convinced that the hooks weigh just the amount I was unable to account for." Thereafter all Israel was convinced that Moses was a faithful and reliable administrator.

The Tabernacle was set up completely, Aaron sacrificed the prescribed offerings, and blessed the people as God had commanded, yet there were no signs of the Divine Presence. Aaron then thought that God was angry with him because he had made the golden calf, and that it was on his account that the Divine Presence did not descend among Israel.

Moses thereupon entered the Tabernacle with his brother Aaron, and together they prayed to the Almighty. Their combined prayers were heard in heaven, and immediately a fire came out from heaven and descended upon the altar. This fire stayed upon the altar almost one hundred and sixteen years, yet the wood of the altar was not consumed, nor did its brass covering melt.

This heavenly fire convinced the people that God was no longer angry with them on account of the golden calf. They shouted for joy, fell upon their faces and sang a song of praise to God. Nadab and Abihu, the two sons of Aaron, the High Priest, said to one another: "When our father and our uncle die, then we will become the leaders of the people." They then took censers in

A fire came out from heaven and descended upon the altar

their hands to sacrifice to God in the Tabernacle without first consulting Moses and Aaron. In spite of the fact that a fire descended from heaven and consumed the offerings, they took coals of fire and placed them in their censers, and laid incense thereon. Immediately two flames of fire issued from the Holy of Holies, each as thin as thread, then dividing they formed four, two of which pierced the nostrils of Nadab, and the other two the nostrils of Abihu, whose souls were burned, although no external injury could be seen.

3. *Eldad and Medad*

When upon the advice of Jethro, and with God's consent, Moses appointed seventy elders from Israel, Eldad and Medad who were among those summoned by Moses thought that they were unworthy of such distinction. God then said: "Because ye were humble in your own eyes, I will bestow upon you five times as much of My spirit as I am about to bestow upon the others." So it was. The others could prophesy of what would take place the day after while Eldad and Medad were also able to prophesy about the distant future.

Now when Moses wished to select the seventy elders in accordance with the command of God, he was in a great predicament, because he was unable to divide the number seventy equally among the twelve tribes. "Should I take five of

each tribe," thought he, "there will be only sixty elders; should I take six of each tribe, there will be seventy-two; and if I take from one tribe more than I take from the other, it would lead to jealousy and discontent."

Finally Moses thought of a good plan. He took seventy slips of parchment, upon which he wrote down the word "elder," and with them two blank slips, and mixed all these in an urn. Seventy-two elders, six from each tribe, now stepped forward, and each drew a slip. Those whose slips were marked "elder" were elected, and those who had drawn blank slips were rejected. This method of election pleased all the Israelites.

God, too, was pleased with the election of the elders, and on the very same day, He permitted the spirit of prophecy to rest upon them, and they began to prophesy.

Eldad and Medad, who were elected as elders, likewise began making prophecies. They said that Moses would die in the wilderness, and that Joshua the son of Nun would become the leader and bring the Israelites into the promised land.

Joshua heard these prophecies of Eldad and Medad, and hurried to his master, saying: "Imprison these two men, so that no one dare in the future to prophesy whatever he may happen to think of."

"O Joshua," replied Moses, "think not that I begrudge you your splendid future. May you be

honored as much as I have been, and may all Israel be honored like you."

4. *Moses Slandered by Aaron and Miriam*

On the day the seventy elders were chosen, their wives illuminated their houses with candles to celebrate the elevation of these men to the dignity of prophets.

"Wherefore these illuminations?" asked Miriam of Zipporah, the wife of Moses.

"The women are celebrating the appointment of their husbands to the office of elders," Zipporah replied.

"Blessed are the women," said Miriam, "who thus see their husbands raised to dignity."

"Woe to the wives of these men!" exclaimed Zipporah.

"Why so?" questioned Miriam in astonishment.

"Ever since your brother was chosen to receive the divine revelations, he has separated himself entirely from me and from the family," complained Zipporah. "So I suppose that these men too will separate themselves from their families."

Thereupon Miriam went to Aaron and told him what Zipporah had made known to her and added: "I have also received divine revelations, yet I have not separated myself from my husband and family." Aaron also said: "I, too, have received revelations, and was not compelled to separate myself from my wife." And then both of

them said: "Our brother has separated himself from his wife not because he was compelled to do so, but simply on account of his great pride, to show how holy a man he is."

Moses heard of the reproaches heaped upon him by Miriam and Aaron, but because of his meek nature he remained silent, for he knew that it was God's command that he be separated from his wife.

God immediately called Aaron and Miriam and said to them: "Since I have called the world into existence, I have not spoken to any prophet otherwise than in a dream; not so with My servant Moses to whom my word is revealed clearly and not in dark speeches. Were you then not afraid to speak against Moses?" And as soon as God departed from them, both Aaron and Miriam became leprous. However, Aaron's leprousy lasted for one moment only; not so with Miriam.

Moses was greatly grieved at this occurrence, and he prayed to God that He heal his sister from her leprosy. To his prayer God replied that Miriam would have to be shut up outside the camp for seven days.

The people were at that time breaking camp and were about to march, but God said: "I know that Miriam once spent many anxious moments when she waited to see what would become of her little brother Moses as he was drifting in the river. Now I will reward her for waiting there. I will

order the cloud of glory not to march forward in front of Israel's camp, and the Israelites shall wait for her seven days until she is entirely healed."

And so it was. The cloud of glory, the ark, the Tabernacle, the priests, the Levites and all the Israelites, did not move until Miriam was healed.

Chapter XXXIX

THE SPIES

1. *The Appointment of the Spies*

WHEN the Israelites approached the boundaries of Canaan, they came to Moses and said to him: "Let us choose men to spy out the land which God has promised to give to us." When they came to present their request, in their eagerness, they abandoned their customary good order. The young crowded the old, and the old pushed away their leaders.

"I cannot do anything," said Moses, "before I inquire of God."

When Moses conveyed their request to God, He said: "How long will they be unfaithful? When I led them through a deadly wilderness they did not say a word, but now that they are approaching a land that flows with milk and honey, they desire to send out spies. However, if they want to send spies, let them do so, but let them not pretend that I ordered them to do so."

Moses then returned to the people and said: "Wherefore do you wish to send spies? Have you

no faith in the Almighty when He says that the land is full of all good things?"

"We do believe in what God has told us," the people replied. "But while in the wilderness, the cloud of glory has preceded and guided us on our way. But once we enter the promised land, the cloud of glory will depart; therefore we want men to go there and spy out the land for us, so that we may know the right course to take. We also know that the Canaanites fear us greatly and therefore hide away your treasures. We wish to send spies to find out for us where they hide away their treasures."

They succeeded in influencing Moses with their arguments so that he also thought it was a good idea to send spies. He thereupon chose one man from each tribe, with the exception of the tribe of Levi, and sent them to spy out the land. Hoshea, the son of Nun, the faithful disciple of Moses, was one of the spies. Moses, who realized the evil reports the spies would bring, at this time changed Hoshea's name to Joshua, saying: "May God stand by you, that you may not follow the counsel of the spies."

God agreed to this change of name. For when God had changed Sarai's name to Sarah, removing the letter *Yod* therefrom, the *Yod* made continual complaints before the Lord for having been removed from the name of so pious a woman. God now found an occasion to compensate the *Yod* by

affixing it to the name of the great leader of the Israelites.

Moses instructed the spies how to conduct themselves, and of what they should take note. "When you enter a city," he said to them, "do not slink in like thieves in alley-ways, but show yourselves in public. If any one will ask you what you want, say to them that you have just come to buy figs, pomegranates and grapes. If you find the inhabitants living in open places, then know that they are mighty warriors, that they depend upon their own strength and fear not the attack of enemies. If, on the other hand, they live in fortified cities, they are weaklings, and in their fear of invaders they seek shelter within their walls." With these instructions the twelve spies departed for the land of Canaan.

On their way to the promised land, the spies with the exception of Joshua and Caleb resolved to warn the people against Palestine. They first tried to persuade Joshua to join them in their plot, but he would not listen. They then approached Caleb and wished to win him over to their side. Their arguments were so strong that Caleb, fearing their influence upon him, hastened to Hebron, where the three Patriarchs lie buried and, standing by their graves, said weepingly: "Send up your prayers for me now, my fathers, that God in His mercy may strengthen my heart and keep me

from the evil counsel of the spies." Encouraged by his praying, Caleb returned to his fellow spies.

2. *The Spies Arrive in Palestine*

When the spies entered the promised land, a plague struck the inhabitants of each and every city they came to. God had caused the plague for the protection of the spies, so that the inhabitants might busy themselves with the burial of their dead, and have no time to concern themselves with the strangers.

When they arrived in the valley of Eshcol, they there beheld wonderful fruit, the like of which they had never seen before. Caleb and Joshua said to the other spies: "Let us take some of this fruit along with us and show our brethren how excellent it is." But the ten spies refused to take of the fruit, because they did not wish the people to know what a good land it was.

Caleb thereupon drew his sword, and said to them: "If you refuse to take of this fruit, this sword shall become satiated with your blood."

Frightened by the courageous challenge of Caleb, the ten spies cut down a vine, which was so heavy that eight of them had to carry it. Talmai, one of the three giant sons of Anak, saw the spies take the vine, and he raised his great voice and shouted at them. So powerful was his voice that they were greatly awed by it and fell

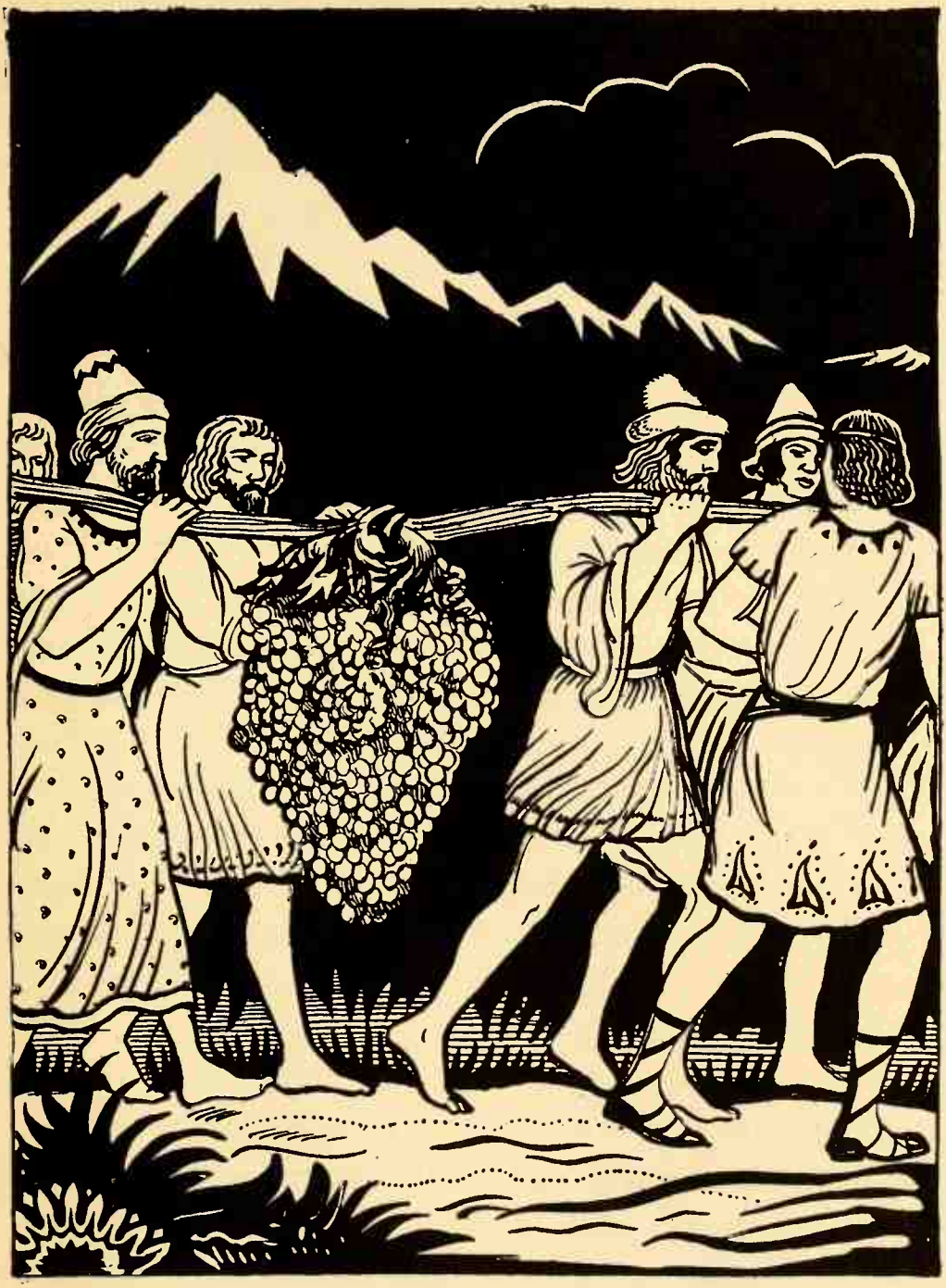
down almost unconscious. Recovering from the effects of the first shock, they heard the voice of the giant again, saying: "Why have you come hither? The whole land belongs to the Lord your God and He may give it to whomever He sees fit." The spies made no reply to the words of the giant, and he let them go away in peace. God said: "Because Talmai allowed the spies to go away unhurt, he and his descendants shall remain long in the land of Canaan."

From there the spies passed on to pick some figs and pomegranates. While they were on the trees, they heard some of the inhabitants talking to one another: "Look, there are some grasshoppers on the trees that have the appearance of human beings."

3. *The Report of the Spies*

After the lapse of forty days the spies returned to the camp of Israel. When Moses heard of the return of the spies he sent for them, and requested them to give their report in the presence of the entire assembly.

"The land we are going to conquer is indeed flowing with milk and honey, but the people that dwell there are very strong. We saw the children of the Anak there; and the Amalekites, against whom we have fought, dwell in the mountains. And what is more, the land through which we passed is a land that consumes its inhabitants, for



The vine was so heavy that eight of the spies had to carry it

all the time we were there we saw parents weep daily for the loss of their children."

The people were inclined to believe the report of the spies, and were persuaded that they had little chance against the inhabitants of the land of Canaan. Joshua then tried to speak and quiet the people, but he was shouted down. Then Caleb pretended to agree with the ten spies and began as follows: "Be silent, I am going to tell the truth. This is not the only thing the son of Amram has done to us." The people hearing these introductory words were under the impression that Caleb sided with the rest of the spies, and therefore remained silent to hear what other accusations he had to make against Moses. But to their utter surprise, he continued: "It was Moses who brought us up out of Egypt, who divided the Red Sea for us and gave us manna as food. We should obey him even if he bade us bring ladders and ascend to heaven." The people were somewhat quieted by his words and returned to their tents.

When the spies saw that their report did not have the desired effect, they went home, put up shrouds and began to lament bitterly. The members of their households asked them the cause of their weeping and in reply they continued their lamentation: "Woe unto us, for you, my sons and daughters, are doomed to die by the sword of the great giants." At these words their sons and daughters burst into loud lamentations. The

neighbors then came and joined them in the wailing till it spread throughout the entire camp, and all the people were weeping.

When the sound of their weeping reached heaven, God said: "Ye weep to-day without cause, but I shall see to it that in the future ye shall have cause to weep on this day." This was the ninth day of the month of Ab when the Temple was destroyed, and this day became forever a day of weeping and lamentation in Israel.

4. *Unfaithfulness Punished*

The people then took counsel amongst themselves to appoint Dathan and Abiram as their future leaders to lead them back into the land of safety, the land of Egypt. Joshua and Caleb tried again to reassure the people by telling them that the land was a very good one, but to no avail, the people would not hearken to them.

God became angry with the children of Israel and He said to Moses: "How long will this people provoke Me to anger? I will destroy them, and I will make of thee a greater and mightier nation than they."

"If a chair with three legs was not able to stand at the time of Thy disfavor, how then shall a chair with but one leg remain standing?" asked Moses. "Furthermore," said Moses, "the nations of the earth who have heard of Thy great deeds in Egypt, on the Red Sea and in the wilderness, will say that

the God of the Israelites was able to make war against one nation but not against thirty-one kings, therefore He has killed the Israelites in the wilderness. Now have mercy upon Thy people, for Thou art long-suffering even to the sinner."

"I have forgiven them even as thou hast asked," said God, "but those sinners who failed to trust in Me shall all die in the wilderness and shall not be able to see the promised land."

The men, who spied out the land and who with their wicked tongues had brought about the whole disaster, received a most terrible punishment. God repaid them measure for measure, for they all died in a horrible fashion.

Chapter XL

THE REBELLION

1. *Korah Complains*

AMRAM, the father of Moses, had three brothers, Izhar, Hebron and Uzziel. Izhar had a son whose name was Korah. He was the richest man in Israel, for he had acquired one-third of the great wealth hidden away by Joseph when in Egypt.

On the day Moses consecrated all the Levites by shaving off the hair of their bodies, Korah was also consecrated in this manner, for he was a Levite. When he returned home his wife ridiculed him and said: "See what the son of Amram has done to you; he has shaved off your hair and made you look like a slave."

"But Moses has shaved off all the hair of his own sons also," Korah replied.

"What does the disgrace of his own sons matter to him, if he feels that he can disgrace you," she said.

Proud of his wealth and incited to rebellion by his wife, Korah argued: "My grandfather Kohath had four sons, Amram, Izhar, Hebron and Uzziel.

The sons of Amram, the first-born, took privileges to themselves, for Aaron is high priest and Moses is king. But I, the son of Izhar, the second son, have the rightful claim to be prince of the Kohathites. Moses, however, has disregarded me and has appointed Elizaphan prince, although his father was the youngest son of my grandfather. I will therefore stir up a rebellion against Moses, and overthrow all the institutions founded by him."

Dathan and Abiram of the tribe of Reuben immediately joined Korah, and then two hundred and fifty men, who were among the most prominent in Israel, likewise joined in the rebellion, Korah wanted to make Moses look ridiculous in the eyes of the people. He and the two hundred and fifty men that were with him dressed themselves in garments of purple and appeared before Moses. Korah asked: "Are we who have garments made entirely of purple, required to attach fringes to the corners of these garments?"

"You certainly are required to do so," Moses replied.

"If one fringe of purple is sufficient," argued Korah, "should not a whole garment made of purple be sufficient, even when there are no fringes attached to the corners?"

Moses remained silent, for he was very meek. And Korah, encouraged by the silence of Moses and thinking that Moses was unable to give answer to his argument, continued: 'If a house be filled

with sacred books, must there be a Mezuzah attached to its door-posts?"

"Indeed," said Moses, "a Mezuzah must be attached to the door-posts of such a house."

Korah then argued: "If the two hundred and seventy-five sections found in the Torah are not sufficient, how then can only two sections attached to the door-posts be sufficient?"

Moses again remained silent, and Korah continued: "Such unreasonable laws could not have come from God, but they are your own laws. You are therefore no prophet and Aaron is no high priest."

Korah then told the people the following tale which he had invented: "There lived in my neighborhood a very poor man who died and left a widow and two daughters. The man left a field and the widow took care of the small estate and barely had enough for herself and her two daughters to live on.

"One day, when this woman set out to plow the field, Moses came to her and said: 'Thou shalt not plow with an ox and an ass together.'

"When the widow was ready to sow the field, Moses appeared again and said: 'Thou shalt not sow thy field with diverse seeds.' When the first ripe fruit appeared in the field, Moses told her that she must bring it to the priest, for to them belong 'the first of all the fruit of the field.' When at length the time came for her to cut it down,

Moses appeared again and said: 'Thou must not wholly reap the corners of thy field, nor gather the gleanings of the harvest, but thou must leave it for the poor.' When she had done all that Moses had told her to do, and was about to thrash the grain, Moses appeared once more and said: 'Thou must give the heave-offering to the priest, and the first and second tithe to the Levite.'

"The poor widow realized that, with such heavy tributes to give, she could no longer maintain herself and the two orphans out of the proceeds of the field. She therefore went and sold the field, and with the money she purchased two ewes, thinking that she might now maintain herself by means of the wool, the milk and the lambs. But when the firstling of the sheep was born, Aaron came and demanded it, for the first-born belongs to the priest. When she began to shear her sheep, Aaron appeared again and said to her: 'The first of the fleece of the sheep is mine.' Later he appeared again and said that one sheep out of every ten belonged to the Levite as tithes.

"The poor widow at last slaughtered her sheep, thinking that now she might safely enjoy the meat. But Aaron appeared again and said: 'To me belong the shoulder, the two cheeks and the maw.'

" 'Alas!' exclaimed the poor widow, 'the slaughtering of the sheep did not deliver me out of your hands! Let the meat then be consecrated to the sanctuary.'

"Aaron said: 'Everything consecrated in Israel is mine.' He then departed, taking with him the meat of the sheep, and leaving behind him the poor widow and her daughters crying bitterly."

"This is what they always do!" exclaimed Korah as he finished his tale. "And they say that they are doing it because God has told them to do so!"

Thus Korah and his horde of rebels complained to Moses and Aaron: "The burden that you lay upon us is much heavier than the burden of the Egyptians. And what is more, since the incident of the spies, fifteen thousand men have died in our midst."

2. *The End of the Rebellion*

On, the son of Peleth, was among the conspirators in Korah's rebellion. When he came home and told his wife of the plot hatched up by Korah, she said to him: "What benefit will you reap from it? If Moses remains master, you are a disciple; and if Korah becomes master, you will likewise be only a disciple."

"Your words are wise, but I was sworn in and they will come to call me to join them," said On, "and if I refuse to go with them I will be ridiculed by everybody."

"If you make up your mind not to join the rebels," said his wife, "I will see to it that they do not come into our house."

To make certain that On would not listen to the

pleas of his associates and join in rebellion against Moses, she gave him wine to drink, and as a result he fell into a deep sleep. Now she said to herself: "All the members of the Lord's congregation are holy, and therefore will surely approach no woman whose hair is uncovered." She then sat down at the door of her tent with streaming hair, and whenever one belonging to the company of Korah came to summon On, he saw the woman sitting at the door in this condition and he started back. Thus On remained in a deep sleep in his tent, and took no part in the rebellion of Korah.

When Moses came to the tent of Korah to plead with him, the three sons of Korah bowed their heads, and said to one another: "How are we to act? Should we rise in honor of Moses, our father would be angry with us and we should violate the commandment, 'Honor thy father and thy mother.' Should we fail to rise in honor of Moses, then we violate the commandment, 'Thou shalt rise in honor of a sage.'" At last one of them said: "Brothers, let us rise in honor of him who comes in the name of peace, and not mind our father who stirs up rebellion." Therefore they were blessed by God with peace on the day that Korah and his horde received their punishment.

Moses now feared that God would destroy all the people because of Korah and his companions. He therefore prayed to God and said: "If one man sin, wilt Thou be wroth with the entire con-

gregation?" And God said to Moses: "I have heard thy prayer for the congregation. Say to them that they are to depart from the tents of Korah, Dathan and Abiram."

The spot upon which Korah, Dathan and Abiram stood suddenly began to open up slowly, and they together with their families and all their possessions sank into the opening. While they were thus sinking slowly, they were heard to cry repeatedly: "Moses is truth, and his Torah is truth."

The three sons of Korah, however, were saved because they had honored Moses in preference to their rebellious father.

SOURCES OF THE LEGENDS

Volume I

Abkir (midrash)
Abodah Zarah (Talmud Babli)
Abot (Midrash)
Abot de-Rabbi Natan (Talmud Babli)
Alphabet of ben Sira
Alphabet of Rabbi Akiba

Baba Batra (Talmud Babli)
Baba Mezia (Talmud Babli)
Bamidbar (Midrash Rabbah)
Baruch
Berakot (Talmud Babli)
Bereshit (Midrash Rabbah)
Bet ha-Midrash (Jellinek)
Bibel und Talmud Schatz

Debarim (Midrash Rabbah)
Dibre ha-Yamim le-Moshe

Ekah (Midrash Rabbah)
Enoch (Midrash)
Erubin (Talmud Babli)

Hagigah (Talmud Babli)
Hekalot (Midrash)
Hulin (Talmud Babli)

Iyob (Midrash)

Kohelet (Midrash Rabbah)
Konen (Midrash)

Leket Midrashim

Ma'aseh Abraham (Bet ha-Midrash, Jellinek)
Ma'aseh de-Rabbi Yehoshua ben Levi (Midrash)
Mayan ha-Hakmah
Megillah (Talmud Babli)
Mekilta de-Rabbi Eliezer
Midrash Aggadah
Milhamah Beshalom
Midrash ha-Gadol
Mishle (Midrash)
More Nebuke ha-Zeman

Nedarim (Talmud Babli)

Pesahim (Talmud Babli)
Pesikta de-Rab Kahanah
Pesikta Rabbati
Pirke de-Rabbi Eliezer

Rashi
Rosh ha-Shanah (Talmud Babli)

Sanhedrin (Talmud Babli)
Sanhedrin (Talmud Yerushalmi)
Seder Rabbah de-Bereshit
Shabbat (Talmud Babli)
Shabuot (Talmud Babli)

Shekalim (Talmud Yerushalmi)
Shemot (Midrash Rabbah)
Shir ha-Shirim (Midrash Rabbah)
Sifri
Sotah (Talmud Babli)

Ta'anit (Talmud Babli)
Ta'anit (Talmud Yerushalmi)
Tana de-Be Eliyahu
Tanhuma (Midrash)
Targum Yerushalmi
Tehillim (Midrash)
Testament of Job

Va-Yikra (Midrash Rabbah)
Va-Yosha (Midrash)

Yalkut Reubeni
Yalkut Shimeoni
Yashar (Book of)
Yelamdenu (Midrash)
Yerahmiel
Yonah (Midrash)
Yuma (Talmud Babli)

Zohar
Zohar Hadash

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